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King Alfred's Version of the Consolations of Boethius ◇ ◇ Done into Modern English, with an Introduction ◇ ◇ ◇ ◇ ◇

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By Walter John Sedgefield
Litt.D., Editor of King
Alfred's Old English Version
of the 'De Consolatione'

Oxford: At the Clarendon
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TO

THE REV. PROFESSOR W. W. SKEAT

LITT.D., D.C.L., LL.D., PH.D.

THIS BOOK

IS

GRATEFULLY DEDICATED

PREFACE

THE preparations for adequately commemorating the forthcoming millenary of King Alfred's death have set going a fresh wave of popular interest in that hero. Lectures have been given, committees formed, subscriptions paid and promised, and an excellent book of essays by eminent specialists has been written about Alfred considered under quite a number of aspects. That great King has himself told us that he was not indifferent to the opinion of those that should come after him, and he earnestly desired that that opinion should be a high one. We have by no means forgotten him, it is true, but yet to very many intelligent people he is, to use a paradox, a distinctly nebulous character of history. His most undying attributes in the memory of the people are not unconnected with singed cakes and romantic visits in disguise to the Danish

Danish camp. It is therefore difficult for many to realize that Alfred wrote books, copies of which, written during his lifetime, are now lying in some of our great libraries. Of these books all are interesting to us from the personal character impressed on them by the King—the *Pastoral Care*, for instance, for its admirable preface containing Alfred's observations on the state of learning in the England of his day, and the *Orosius* for the valuable geographical contributions which he inserted in his version of the once famous historian. But there is one of his books that more than the others is instinct with a certain anonymously personal note such as we look for in vain in English literature for hundreds of years after. This book is his version of the *Consolations of Philosophy* of Boethius, the making of which was to Alfred a love's labour. It satisfied his intellectual cravings and stimulated his uncultured but vigorous mind, and he resolved to give his still more unlettered lieges a share in the treat. So he turned it into his own tongue, as the King of the West Saxons might be expected to do, in a large and royal way, scattering up and down the work such notes and comments as he judged needful. His *Boethius* heads the roll of English philosophical writings; it likewise heads the roll of English translations.

lations. It is hoped that the modern English dress here given to the King's best book will help to make him less an unsubstantial shadow for Englishmen of to-day, and more a real man, practical, right-feeling, and earnest beyond his generation.

A few words on the method and aim of this modern version may be said here rather than in the Introduction. The Anglo-Saxon text followed is that edited by the translator for the Oxford University Press last year. The prose part is rendered quite literally, generally 'word by word,' as the King says of parts of his own version. Thus the simplicity and directness of the original Old English are kept. In the version of the alliterating verses, printed together after the prose, the metre of the original Old English has been retained as far as is allowed by the limitations of modern English, but literalness has not been thereby sacrificed. The result, I may hope, will give a fair idea of the original, which itself is far from echoing the hammer-and-anvil lines of the best Old English song-smiths, as we see them at work in the *Beowulf*. The Introduction is intended to give the general reader what he may like to know about Alfred's *Boethius* and his literary method in general, and the student of English literature will perhaps find interest

in

in the selections from later English translations of the *Consolations*.

It is now time for me to close this preface, first expressing my heartiest thanks to Professor York Powell, who has kindly looked carefully through the proofs of the Introduction and portions of both the prose and the verse, and has helped me generally out of his mature experience.

CHRIST'S COLLEGE, CAMBRIDGE,
March, 1900.

N.B.—The passages in the prose text which do not occur in the Latin original are printed in italics, but Alfred's numerous omissions are not indicated in the text. For details, the Introduction to the Oxford edition of the Old English *Boethius* may be consulted.

INTRODUCTION

§ 1. *Wessex at Peace. Alfred's Reforms.*

In the year 878 A.D., on the conclusion of the negotiations begun with Guthrum at Wedmore, Wessex emerged unbeaten but sorely shaken from a life-struggle that had lasted many years without intermission. Inch by inch the Scandinavian pirates had been driven back, and now the West-Saxon king could boast of a broader realm than ever before had been his, and better still, a more united people. The first seven or eight years of his reign had been spent in camp or on the march, fighting, pursuing, retreating, in the varying fortunes of the struggle; a busy time, with small leisure for thoughts or deeds unconnected with immediate and constant peril. Alfred's early ambitions had perforce to sleep, while his people had enough to do to hold their ground against the invader, standing still or going back on the path of culture. Still, it is probable that the harsh training king and subjects had gone through together in their dark days was after all a real though disguised benefit to both. They shared the memory of perils and hardships borne together, and must have come to understand and sympathize with each other as only those can do that have side by side faced

a common danger for many months. And so Alfred would, when brighter days came, find ready to his hand 'fitting instruments of rule,' as he himself calls them. He entered upon the herculean labour of building up and consolidating the shattered fabric of society and government with a deep sense of the responsibility involved, and a clear perception of the difficulties to be faced. But his keen enthusiasm for the work made it seem easy, and carried him through it all with admirable success. Everything had to be done, as a veritable chasm gaped between the present and the past. First of all, the laws of the West-Saxon kings had to be copied afresh, amended, and published, and their honest administration enforced, so that equal justice done between man and man might smooth the way for the arts of peace. The citizen army had to be organized against a possible recrudescence of the piratical raids, a fleet of ships had to be built, and London resettled and fortified. Agriculture could now be carried on in security, and the simple arts and manufactures of that day needed careful fostering. The Church, sorely weakened and humiliated after repeated outrage on the part of the heathen and by neglect of her own distracted people, must be raised to her former high estate. Her bishops and priests must be put back in their cures, her monasteries endowed, and piety and learning again cherished.

§ 2. *His Zeal for Learning.*

For of all the many forms of activity into which Alfred plunged in his eagerness to make up for lost time, we are sure that, next to religion, the cause of learning

learning lay nearest his heart. He himself had always loved it, its books and its bookmen, and he wanted his people to share his love. He quite understood that before a nation can begin to advance along the road of enlightenment and civilization it must be taught the elements of education; and we know from his own account into what a lamentable ignorance, not only the common people, but even the clergy had fallen. The words of the King on this subject are most instructive, and for the history of his times of prime authority. 'The sacred orders,' he says, 'were once zealous in teaching and study. . . . Men used to come to England from other lands in search of wisdom and instruction, but now we should be obliged to get them from abroad if we wanted them. So entirely was learning fallen away in England that there were very few on this side of the Humber who could understand their church services in English, or even turn a Latin letter into English; and I think there were not many beyond the Humber. There were so few of them that I cannot call to mind a single one south of the Thames, when I succeeded to the throne. . . . Thinking over all this, I remembered also how I had seen, before the country was all ravaged and burnt, the churches throughout England standing full of treasures and books. There was also a great number of God's ministers, but they had very little profit of their books, of which, not being written in their own tongue, they could make nothing.'

One of Alfred's first acts in furtherance of his educational schemes was, if we may believe the story in Asser's *Life*, the foundation of a court school, wherein he followed, consciously or not, the example of the

great

great Frankish king whom he resembled in so many ways. It is interesting to note that Charlemagne had, like Alfred, much trouble in interesting his rough warlike nobles in his schemes for the spread of education.

As stated by himself, Alfred's plan was that 'all the sons of English free men, who could afford the time, should be kept at their studies, while they were as yet of no use to the state, until they could read English with ease. Then those who were to continue their education and to be promoted to a higher order should be taught Latin.'

Alfred, again like Charlemagne, had the good sense to gather round him the best scholars he could find, sending to other lands for them, as his own produced them no longer. The names of the little group of learned clerics that helped the King to such good purpose were—the two Mercians, Werfrith or Waerferth, Bishop of Worcester, and Plegmund, Archbishop of Canterbury; Grimbold, a Frankish priest, afterwards Abbot of Winchester; John, a priest from Old Saxony; and Asser, a Welsh monk. All of these, except the last, are mentioned by the King in the preface to his translation of the *Pastoral Care* of Pope Gregory.

With the co-operation of these scholars, then, Alfred took in hand the education of his people. Though hungry for knowledge, it is probable that he was at a disadvantage in his equipment for its pursuit. He doubtless had an education suitable to a king's son when he was at Rome, and afterwards in England, but he assumed the reins of government at so early an age, and was so entirely absorbed in fighting the Northmen during the first years of his reign, that he cannot have had much

much leisure for keeping up or adding to his learning. Hence he could not fully understand unaided the more difficult books written in Latin, the sole language of the learned in Western Europe in his day. In the *Life of Alfred*, ascribed to Asser, we are told that one of his learned men used daily to read aloud to the King passages from his favourite authors. William of Malmesbury, too, a later chronicler, who made use of early annals and other old sources, mentions how Asser used to explain to Alfred the harder passages met with in reading the Latin text of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* of Boethius. Being aware that the knowledge of Latin was wellnigh extinct among the clergy of his kingdom, and that to the common folk every avenue to learning was barred, Alfred conceived, and about the year 886 began to carry out, a plan of translating into English certain well-known standard works which he judged best fitted to give in moderate compass a good plain fund of knowledge to the Englishman of his day. These works, to use the King's words, were 'such books as are the most needful for all men to know.' The modern reader should remember that a man who had mastered ten Latin books in the ninth century in England would have been accounted well read, and a knowledge of the contents of fifty would have amounted to encyclopaedic learning. Alfred's choice fell upon the following works:—

1. *The Universal History* of Orosius, written early in the fifth century, being a compendium of the history of the world, written from a Christian point of view.

2. *The History of the English Church* by the Venerable Bede, containing the history of the English from

from their conquest of Britain up to the end of the seventh century, chiefly ecclesiastical, enlivened with accounts of saints and miraculous occurrences.

3. The *Dialogues* of Pope Gregory the Great, a popular book, describing the lives and miracles of Italian saints, and treating of the life of the soul after death.

4. The *Pastoral Care* or *Rule* of the same Gregory, a practical manual of the duties of the clergy.

5. The *De Consolatione Philosophiae* of Boethius.

6. The *Soliloquies* of St. Augustine.

Of these books the *History* of Orosius, the *Consolation of Philosophy*, the *Pastoral Care*, and the *Soliloquies* were put into English by the King himself. The *Dialogues* of Gregory were perhaps translated by Bishop Werfrith at Alfred's suggestion, and it is probable that the English version of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* in its original form was also the work of one of the King's learned priests.

§ 3. *The De Consolatione Philosophiae of Boethius.*

By far the most important of these works was the famous treatise of Boethius. It was the philosophical *vade-mecum* of the Middle Ages, and countless scholars during a thousand years knew little else of abstract reasoning save what they found in its pages. The influence that it exercised on the expression of abstract thinking during many centuries is hardly conceivable by us moderns, who can range freely over the best of ancient classical literature and wield a philosophical vocabulary ready made for us. Its influence and popularity, indeed, as a book of practical piety, can only be compared

compared with that of the later *Imitation of Christ*, and the earlier Cicero's *De Officiis*. Hundreds of manuscripts of it are still to be found in dozens of libraries, some of them going back to the tenth century; and it was one of the first books printed in Europe. Wherever the rude tongues of mediaeval Europe began to be articulate in prose, versions of the *De Consolatione Philosophiae* in the vernacular appeared. Of these early translations Alfred's was the first, and it was followed after the lapse of about a hundred years by a literal rendering into the Alemannic dialect of the Old High German language made at the famous monastery of St. Gall by the monk Notker.

To the eleventh century belongs a fragment of a manuscript now in the Public Library of Orleans containing part of a free rendering or imitation in old Provençal. In the course of the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries there appeared four versions in French, the first by the famous Jehan de Meun, who dedicated it to Philippe le Bel. In England no less a poet than Geoffrey Chaucer made a prose translation. He was followed by nearly a dozen others in the following centuries, including Queen Elizabeth, and the last English version was published as late as the year 1897. We have said nothing, be it noted, of Italian, Spanish, and Greek versions, all of which had begun to appear before the end of the fifteenth century. Other tongues have also done their share in popularizing the *Consolations*. It has frequently been annotated and imitated, and it has comforted hundreds in their day of affliction. Our own Sir Thomas More had it with him in prison, and even wrote an imitation of it. Leslie,

Bishop of Ross, sent an imitation of it to his royal and captive mistress in 1572. Its influence on European literature has been immense. Traces have been found in the ancient English poem of *Beowulf*. Chaucer's poems are steeped in it. Gower, Lydgate, and Spenser drank inspiration at this fountain, as the author of the *Roman de la Rose* in France, and the greater Dante and Boccaccio in Italy had done in their day.

The sad surroundings under which the *Consolation of Philosophy* was written have ever found a responsive chord of sympathy in the hearts of the oppressed, and never more readily than in those turbulent times when the great ones of the earth were liable to be reft in a day of rank and honours at the nod of a capricious tyrant.

§ 4. *Boethius and his Fate.*

Let us now glance at the life of the author of this classic of the Middle Ages, the man whom Gibbon styles 'the last of the Romans whom Cato or Tully could have acknowledged for their countryman.'

About 400 years before King Alfred wrote, Theodoric, King of the Ostrogoths, starting from Wallachia, led a host of his folk over the Alps, and overthrowing Odovacar (Odoacer) reigned over Italy in his stead. Theodoric's rule for many years was just and impartial, neither unduly oppressing the orthodox nor favouring those of the Arian heresy to which he himself belonged. He also respected the Imperial traditions, so that the Roman Senate continued to exercise at least a show of its old functions.

Among the eminent Romans of the time one was marked out for high honour by the new ruler on account of

of his high descent, vast wealth, and remarkable ability. Amicius Manlius Severinus Boethius, who was born about 480 A.D., traced his origin to families powerful even under the Republic. His wife Rusticiana was a daughter of Symmachus, a nobleman of great connexions and estate. Boethius rose from one honour to another, being Consul in 510, and again in 522 in conjunction with his two young sons; and at length he came to be Head of the Senate, the most dignified position to which a Roman subject could attain. Contemporary historians tell us in what repute Boethius was held by all right-thinking men as well as by Theodoric, and how he laboured to lay bare the corruption and misgovernment of the Roman officials. His enemies were consequently numerous, and they plotted his downfall.

After years of beneficent rule, Theodoric suddenly developed signs of intolerance. He sent Pope John the First on a humiliating embassy to Justin the Emperor of the East at Constantinople, and on his return cast him into prison, where the old and feeble pontiff soon died. Theodoric was now in the mood to listen to charges made by the foes of Boethius. Accused of being concerned in a conspiracy against his imperial master, the noble Roman defended himself with the eloquence for which he was famed, but in vain. He was sentenced by the Senate to imprisonment, Theodoric still wishing to keep up an appearance of legality, and was confined in a dungeon at Ticinum. There, when his property had been confiscated, and after many months of imprisonment, he was, as we are told, tortured and put to death.

Those of his contemporaries whose writings have reached us, such as Priscian, Cassiodorus, and Ennodius, regarded Boethius as decidedly the most able and learned man of his day. He was deeply versed in the works of the Greek philosophers, some of which he turned into Latin and annotated for the use of his countrymen. It is certain that for centuries after his death the mediaeval schoolmen knew Aristotle almost solely through the translations and commentaries of Boethius. He had also a remarkable talent for mathematics, science, and practical engineering, and his work on music remained till last century the chief text-book on the subject at Oxford and Cambridge. After his death Boethius came to be regarded by the Church of Rome as a martyr for the orthodox faith, and was canonized as St. Severinus. Many works on doctrinal theology have been attributed to him, but modern scholars are not agreed as to his authorship of them, nor even as to his having been a Christian at all. His most important and authentic work, the *De Consolatione Philosophiae*, contains nothing from which the Christianity of its author could be positively inferred, for it bases its philosophy entirely on the old systems of Aristotle, the Stoics, and the Neo-Platonists.

§ 5. *Alfred's Method of Translation.*

Such was the man who wrote the famous book which King Alfred set himself to make known to his people. That it was a task after the English monarch's own heart we may well believe. The splendid career and the wretched end of the last great Roman must have deeply

deeply impressed Alfred, who had himself known adversity, and was far from sure that his present heyday would last.

But the task of translation, though congenial, was difficult. In the first place, Alfred's knowledge of Latin can hardly have sufficed to give him an exact idea of the contents of a book whose style was modelled on the old classical writers of Rome, and differed widely from the crude Latin written by the learned monks in the ninth century. This difficulty the King surmounted, as we have already noticed, by having Asser read out the Latin text and explain it to him; and this is confirmed by an examination of Alfred's version, which in many parts bears the marks of having been written from a recent recollection of the Latin rather than directly from it. The King's version makes no attempt to imitate the artificial and involved periods of Boethius; he was content to write so as to be 'understanded of the people,' and in this he succeeded, for his English, though devoid of art and often inelegant and rambling, is clear enough as to the sense. It is probable that Alfred wrote as he spoke, for he could have found but little prose literature in English fit to form his style upon. Certain parts of the Vulgate and the Book of Psalms and a number of prayers had been Englished, as the *Life* informs us; but beyond these it is likely that no prose of a literary character existed in West-Saxon. All previous literary effort in English had taken the form of verse, which chiefly flourished north of the Humber; and we have the curious, but not isolated, spectacle of a noble and expressive poetry co-existing with a rude, faltering, barely articulate

articulate prose, as we can see it in the old charters which have come down to us. In the process of transferring the ideas of Boethius into English of the ninth century a certain loss was inevitable. This Alfred doubtless realized, and from the first resolved to attempt no more than to give the general sense of his original, now keeping fairly close to the Latin, now being content to find a simple expression for 'dark words'; here omitting what he judged of less moment for the end he had in view, there making additions of his own. And it is just these additions that are the most interesting part of the King's version. In them we see him in the capacity of author, and can make a comparison between the ideals he himself here puts before us and his success in realizing them as recorded in the pages of history. In this connexion we may note that the annals of the West Saxons, perhaps previously written in Latin, were in the latter years of Alfred's rule recorded in English, probably by the King's orders, and the events of his reign were described in language of considerable vigour, with which it is instructive to compare the prose of the royal writer himself. These annals form the first instalment of the famous *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle*, which was continued in various monasteries, till the last version, the *Peterborough Book*, ends with the joyful accession of Henry II.

Thus King Alfred may be regarded as the first known writer of English literary prose. Abbot Ælfric, about a century after, recognized his debt to the King, saying that in his day 'there were no other godly books in the English tongue save the books that King Alfred

Alfred skilfully translated from Latin into English.' Ælfric formed himself consciously on the style of the King, and in his hands English prose became smoother and clearer, more elegant, and more suited to the expression of shades of thought.

It is now time to see how the English King went to work in turning the *Consolations of Philosophy* into his own tongue. A glance over his version will at once show that it is very far from being even a free translation of the original work. Alfred evidently realized that a literal rendering, such as we find in his version of the *Pastoral Care*, would be a difficult task for himself, and would be largely unintelligible to the people for whom it was intended. So he resolved to omit what seemed to him unessential, or too hard to translate, or too stiff for plain men's comprehension, and he did not hesitate to amplify where he thought a fuller treatment needed. Thus at the very beginning of the work he supplies a historical Introduction, and boldly transposes and condenses the first few sections of the Latin; a treatment to which he occasionally resorts throughout the book, particularly at the end. One is soon struck in reading Alfred's version by the large number of explanatory notes inserted in the text. The King watches his chance, and explains allusions, mythological, historical, and geographical, with evident pleasure, and sometimes at great length.

This plan was also followed by Alfred in his *Orosius*, and here we see his anxiety that obscurities should be removed, so that his book might be truly a popular one, and read by persons who had no knowledge of the ages that lay behind them, and to whom a literal

translation

translation of the *De Consolatione* would often have seemed mere nonsense. It has been proved that Alfred made considerable use of Latin commentaries which had already appeared before his day, just as they had appeared in the case of the old classical writers, and many of the additions that distinguish Alfred's version, and till quite recently were unhesitatingly credited to him, are now seen to correspond, often word for word, with commentaries still extant in MSS. dating from the tenth and eleventh centuries[1]. This, however, only shows that Alfred procured the best MSS. of the *Consolation* that he could, and used the commentaries written in the margin, just as modern scholars make use of the *scholia* in preparing their editions of the classical texts.

From a modern reader's point of view these constant digressions seem to encumber the text and impede the free course of the argument, but we should remember that in Alfred's day such things as footnotes were unknown, so that he was obliged to put everything into the text, unless he had chosen to imitate the *scholia* or explanatory notes written on the broad margins of the Latin manuscripts. Alfred's arrangement, however, was exactly adapted to the purpose he had in view, for as books were in those days generally read aloud by one man in the presence of others, it was convenient that his reading should flow on without interruption from distracting notes. Another point in which Alfred's version differs from the original is its distinctly Christian colouring. As we have said before, Boethius

[1] See Introduction to the Clarendon Press edition of King Alfred's *Boethius*.

gives

gives no sign in his *Consolations of Philosophy* that he was acquainted with or influenced by the Christian faith. Alfred, on the contrary, mentions Christ by name, speaks of 'Christian men,' 'angels,' 'the devil'; and the name of God, which the Roman seldom directly mentions, occurs nearly two hundred times in the English version. Alfred's allusions to Old Testament history form an entirely new feature, while as a Western Churchman he shows his disapproval of the Arian Theodoric as markedly as he shows his sympathy with the Catholic Boethius.

Frequently Alfred forgets his rôle of translator, and prompted by a word or phrase of his original, writes freely as his own feelings taught him. One of these spontaneous outpourings has a keen and enduring interest for Englishmen; revealing as it does the noble aims of him whom the late Professor Freeman called 'the most perfect character in history.' This is the passage on the duties of a king forming chapter xvii, where Alfred sets forth his aims in stirring words that deserve a place on every monument that Englishmen may raise to their national hero. '*It has ever been my desire*,' he says, '*to live honourably while I was alive, and after my death to leave to them that should come after me my memory in good works.*'

§ 6. *Manuscripts of the Old English Boethius.*

King Alfred's *Boethius* has reached us in two manuscripts, one of the tenth century written about fifty or sixty years after his death, and the other dating from the beginning of the twelfth century. The older manuscript

manuscript is now in the British Museum, having once formed part of the collection made by Sir Henry Cotton in the seventeenth century. It was injured by the fire which ravaged this valuable collection in the year 1740, and for a century afterwards lay neglected in a box. Some sixty years ago two scholars arranged the scattered and charred leaves, and with great skill mounted them separately in an album, like photographs, so that now the greater part of the writing on the damaged vellum can be made out in a favourable light. Towards the end of the seventeenth century, when this manuscript was still perfect, Franciscus Junius, a German scholar settled in England, the first serious and critical student of the oldest English, took from it many readings and wrote them in the margin of the copy he had made of the later manuscript, copy and manuscript being now in the Bodleian Library. This manuscript is in perfect preservation. Junius also copied from the Cotton or older manuscript the whole of the alliterating version of the metres of Boethius which in the later manuscript are rendered in Old English prose.

Besides these two manuscripts, a small fragment of a third was discovered at the Bodleian Library at Oxford by Professor Napier some years ago. It is extremely probable that such a popular book as King Alfred's *Boethius* would have been frequently copied, so that it is somewhat strange that more manuscripts of it have not come down to us. We are told that among the books presented by Bishop Leofric to the chapter of Exeter Cathedral in the eleventh century there was an old English version of the *De Consolatione*, referred to as *Boeties boc on englisc*, 'The Book of

Boethius

Boethius in English.' The two manuscripts above mentioned differ in the following respects as to their contents. The older one has, as we have before said, a metrical alliterating version of the *carmina* of Boethius, which in the later one are rendered into prose. Again, while the text of the later manuscript is broken up into forty-two chapters that do not always correspond to the divisions in the Latin original, the older manuscript has no formal divisions, except that the end of each book and the beginning of the next are indicated. Both manuscripts had the same prose preface, but the older manuscript contains in addition a metrical proem which is wanting in the later one. Finally, the latter has a table of contents prefixed.

§ 7. *The Two Versions of the Lays of Boethius.*

Alfred's *prose* rendering of the verses of the original is often closer than that of the rest of the book. Some he omits altogether, especially towards the end, and one he amplifies to an immense extent (pp. 87–91). An interesting question arises regarding the authorship of the version of the *carmina* which we find in the earlier manuscript. This is in verses of the usual Old English type, each line of which consists of two half-lines separated by a pause, with one or two stressed words in the first half-line alliterating with the first stressed word in the second, as in the line :—

*S*etton *s*uðweardes . *s*igeðeoda twa,

or, as we may render it :—

*T*wo *t*ribes victorious . *t*ramped to the south.

Did King Alfred write this alliterating version as well

well as the prose one which occurs in the later manuscript?

In seeking an answer to this question we will first turn to the prose preface prefixed to the work in both manuscripts (see p. 9). Here we find it stated that after King Alfred 'had translated this book into English prose, he afterwards turned it into verse, as it is now done.' This seems plain enough, and if we believe Alfred wrote this preface—and we have no *prima facie* reason to doubt it—the question is settled. The metrical preface found in the older manuscript confirms the statement as to Alfred's authorship. But not a few scholars, after a careful comparison of the two versions of the *carmina*, have persuaded themselves that the King could not have been the author of the metrical version, and are consequently forced to deny him the authorship of the prefaces.

What we know for certain on this question does not amount to much, and may be thus summarized.

Let us in the first place for convenience indicate by the letter B the prose version of the metres of Boethius which is found only in the Bodleian or later manuscript of Alfred's translation, and by the letter C the alliterating metrical version of the same metres which only occurs in the Cotton or older manuscript.

1. A careful comparison between the two versions clearly shows us that C was made by a person who had B before him, the former being only an expansion in metrical form of the latter.

2. It is equally certain that the Latin original was not used in the making of C. Thus we see that B represents the older version made by King Alfred.

3. Another

3. Another thing to notice is that not all the *metra* of B have been turned into verse in C; and the omitted ones are not introduced and dismissed with the customary words 'Then Philosophy began to sing,' or 'When Philosophy had sung this song.'

4. Only a few lines in C contain new thoughts. Of these additions the chief is the simile where the earth is compared to an egg (metr. xx. ll. 169–175), and this was derived from a Latin commentary.

Now, putting aside the Prefaces, the opponents of the King's authorship of C base their case on two considerations, one being the third of the above-mentioned facts. (*a*) The King, they say, would not have omitted any *metra* when turning B into C. (*b*) Further, they object that C is but a weak diluted version of the terse and often vigorous prose of B, and more likely to have been the work of some clerical versifier than of the King himself, who shows vigour and character in his literary work, and who would have added to and improved on B if he had resolved to recast it in a metrical form.

To the first of these two arguments it may be replied that as the Latin original was laid aside, and B only was used in the preparation of C, Alfred might have easily overlooked some of the *metra* which were not preceded nor followed by the usual formulas; or again, he might have purposely omitted them for some reason or other. The second argument takes it for granted that Alfred must have been a good poet as well as a good king; and further, it puts C in a false light. We have to bear in mind that in the days of King Alfred, poetry, if ever it had been cultivated in the south

south of England as a branch of literature, had greatly declined in form and substance from the splendour to which it had attained in the preceding century in Northumbria. The modern critic is too apt to compare C with this older poetry, much to the disadvantage of the former; whereas we should remember that C was most probably meant to be read aloud or chanted. Thus then the seemingly idle expansions and repetitions which we find in it, and the occurrence of words and phrases consecrated to the use of poetry, would have greatly added to its effect, and made it more acceptable to the illiterate but unspoiled West-Saxons, to whose ears the folk-songs were quite familiar. This is only an illustration of the fondness that all primitive races have for a regular chanted measure accompanied by a well-marked rhythm. Further, we learn from the *Life* attributed to Asser that Alfred loved the poetry of his native land, and learned much of it as a child, and we may well believe that he would welcome the chance of himself adding to the national store of verse. Nor should we forget that he has given us some specimens of his verses in the Preface to his *Pastoral Care*. To sum up then, there seems no reason to doubt the tradition of antiquity and the testimony of the prefaces, even if these were not written by the King, that it was Alfred who turned the prose of B into the verse of C. We may imagine that, having completed the prose version of the *De Consolatione*, he felt that by versifying the *metra* he should be only doing the right thing by his author, and at the same time giving the lays of Boethius a form that would readily lend itself to learning by heart and recitation. There would be no necessity for bringing

new

new thoughts into the verses. He had shown plenty of originality already in his prose version of Boethius, far more than in any of his other translations; and, besides, a fresh handling of the subject would probably have taken more time than he could spare in his busy life. His end then would be fully attained if he produced a rough metrical version with the familiar alliteration and swing of the national poetry; and in this he succeeded very fairly. His subjects may well have preferred the more long-winded verses, with their familiar poetical catchwords and reminiscences of the older poetry, to the more severe and colourless prose of his earlier version.

§ 8. *A list of Alfred's notable comments and additions may be here given:*

Biblical and Christian. Noah, pp. 35, 112. Nimrod, p. 112. Jerusalem, p. 7. Heavenly city, pp. 120, 165. Angels, pp. 60, 78, 111, 150, 165, 166, 169, 171, 172, 174. Holy martyrs, p. 25. Christ, pp. 25, 178, 188, 193. Christians, pp. 1, 153. Devil, p. 39. God the roof and base, p. 127. Unity of God, p. 83.

Mythological. Orpheus and Eurydice, pp. 116, 117. Ulysses and Circe, pp. 133, 134. Hercules and Busiris, p. 37. Hercules and the Hydra, p. 148. Titans war with gods, p. 12. Weland the smith, p. 48.

Historical. Boethius, p. 52. Cyrus and Croesus, p. 15. Theodoric, pp. 1, 34, 64. Nero, pp. 34, 40. Pope John, p. 1. Rædgod, p. 1. Aleric, p. 1. Tarquin, p. 35. Nero, pp. 34, 40. Regulus, p. 37. Homer and Virgil, p. 165. Ptolemy, p. 43. Burning of Troy, p. 40. Roman Treasurers, p. 69. Cato, p. 48. Brutus, p. 48. Cicero, pp. 44, 168. Catullus and Nonius, p. 66. Nero and Seneca, p. 71. Papinianus and Antonius, p. 72. Unnatural children, p. 76.

Geographical.

Geographical. Mount Etna, pp. 34, 35. Scythians, pp. 1, 44. Thule, p. 73.

General. Pirate fleet, p. 33. Noxious insects, p. 36. Languages of the world, pp. 44, 113. Air, fire, and water, pp. 51, 88, 89. Seasons, p. 51. Sea and land, p. 52. The lynx, p. 79. True friends, p. 57. Attributes of Wisdom, p. 67. Common origin of mankind, p. 74. Soul and body, pp. 91, 97, 114. Sun, moon, and stars, pp. 90, 96, 158, 159. Saturn, pp. 120, 147. The Wain Shafts, p. 146. Collapse of Universe, p. 106. The use of fables, p. 115. The spoken word, p. 27. The threefold soul, p. 90. Growth of trees, p. 103. Instruments and materials for government, p. 41. Race for a crown, p. 130. The deed and the will, p. 127. Proud kings, p. 128. Excess leads to sin, p. 129. Folly and fools, p. 141. The example of great men, p. 163. Grades of intelligence, pp. 171, 172.

Similes and Metaphors. Brook, river, and ocean, pp. 56, 92, 96. Sifting meal, p. 105. Ingot of metal, p. 101. Fire and smoke, p. 136. Woman in travail, p. 76. Light shining through crack in door, p. 110. Children and old men, p. 124. Children's games, p. 124. The eagle, p. 15. Habits of swine, p. 133. Crash of forest-tree, p. 136. Refining silver, p. 139. Wheel, nave, spokes and fellies, pp. 151, 152. Good seamanship, p. 170. Dung in midden, p. 119. The body and its members, p. 131. Diseased eyes unable to bear light, p. 141. The King with enslaved subjects, p. 166.

§ 9. *Later English Versions of the 'Consolations.'*

We will now place before the reader in chronological order specimens of the English versions of the *Consolation of Philosophy* that have been made since Alfred's time. Taken together they give a fair idea of the course of English translation during the last five hundred

hundred years. The same passages, both from the prose and the verse, will be given where possible.

Not a single attempt was made, so far as is known, to follow the great King's example, until nearly five centuries after he wrote his *Boethius*. The task would have been perhaps too heavy for the English language and for English learning. During these centuries our speech had been as it were in the melting-pot. The old standard West-Saxon, in the political and social ferment that had followed the Norman Conquest, had given place to various provincial dialects as literary media. These in their turn had begun to merge in another standard form, rivalling in vigour and adaptability the Norman stocks from which it took many a graft. This standard English, which at length emerged from the competition of dialects, to last with comparatively slight change to the present day, was largely indebted to the labours of our first great modern poet. Geoffrey Chaucer in the beginning of his literary career devoted much of his time to translation, and felt himself obliged, in the course of his work, to transplant hundreds of Norman-French words into his own tongue. By this means he made English a more complete instrument than he found it; and in his literal translation of the *Consolation of Philosophy* he laid the foundations of an English philosophical prose. This version, all in prose, swarming with new words, the greater number of which are still in use, is of uncommon interest, as it is the first prose work of the master, and the source of the many allusions to and quotations from Boethius which run through his original poems. A peculiarity of Chaucer's *Boëce* lies in the inclusion of

glosses or explanatory notes in the text. They are usually introduced by the words 'That is to say,' and most of them were derived from the Latin manuscript which Chaucer had before him.

BOETHIUS, Book iii, metr. 2.

It likeþ me to shewe by subtil songe wiþ slakke and delitable soun of strenges how þat nature myȝty enclineþ and flitteþ gouernementȝ of þinges, and by whiche lawes she purueiable kepiþ þe grete worlde, and how she bindynge restreineþ alle þingus by a bonde þat may nat be vnbounden. Al be it so þat þe liouns of þe contree of pene beren þe faire cheines, and taken metes of þe handes of folk þat ȝeuen it hem, and dreden her sturdy maystres of whiche þei ben wont to suffren betinges, yif þat hir horrible mouþes ben bibled (þat is to sein of bestes devoured), hir corage of tyme passeþ þat haþ ben ydel and rested, repaireþ aȝein, þat þei roren greuously and remembren on hir nature, and slaken hir nekkes from hir cheins vnbounden, and hir maistre first to-teren wiþ blody toþe assaieþ þe woode wraþþes of hem, (þis is to sein þei freten hir maister). And þe iangland brid þat syngiþ on þe heye braunches, (þis is to sein in þe wode), and after is inclosed in a streit cage, al þouȝ þat þe pleiyng besines of men ȝeueþ hem honiede drinkes and large metes wiþ swete studie, ȝit naþeles yif þilke brid skippynge oute of hir streite cage seeþ þe agreable shadewes of þe wodes. she defouleþ wiþ hir fete hir metes yshad, and sekeþ mournyng oonly þe wode, and twitriþ desirynge þe wode wiþ hir swete voys. Þe ȝerde of a tree þat is haled adoun by myȝty strengþe bowiþ redely þe croppe adoun, but yif þat þe hande of hym þat it bent lat it gon aȝein, an oon þe crop lokeþ vp ryȝt to heuene. Þe sonne phebus þat failleþ at euene in þe westrene wawes retorniþ aȝein eftsones his cart by a priue paþe þere as it is wont aryse. Alle þinges seken aȝein in to hir propre cours, and alle þinges reioisen hem of hir retournynge aȝein to hir nature, ne noon ordinaunce nis bytaken to þinges but þat þat haþ ioignynge þe endynge to þe bygynnynge, and haþ

makid

makid þe cours of it self stable þat it chaungeth nat from hys propre kynde.

Book iv, prose 2.

Þan quod she 'Yif þat a wyȝt be myȝty to moeue and go vpon hys feet, and anoþer to whom þilke naturel office of feet lakkeþ enforceþ hym to gone crepynge vpon hys handes, whiche of þise two auȝte to ben holden more myȝty by ryȝt?' 'Knyt furþe þe remenaunt,' quod I. 'For no wyȝt ne douteþ þat he þat may gone by naturel office of feet ne be more myȝty þan he þat ne may nat.' 'But þe souereyne good,' quod she, 'þat is euenlyche purposed to þe good folk and to badde, þe good folke seken it by naturel office of uertues, and þe shrewes enforcen hem to geten it by dyuerse couetise of erþely þinges, whiche þat nis no naturel office to geten þilke same souereyne goode. Trowest þou þat it be any oþer wyse?' 'Nay,' quod I, 'for þe consequence is open and shewynge of þinges þat I haue graunted: þat nedes goode folk moten ben myȝty, and shrewes feble and vnmyȝty.' 'Þou rennest aryȝt byfore me,' quod she, 'and þis þe iugement, þat is to seyn; I iuge of þe ryȝt as þise leches ben wont forto hopen of seke folk, whan þei aperceyuen þat nature is redressed and wiþstondeþ to þe maladie.'

Rather more than a generation after Chaucer wrote his *Boëce*, a metrical version of the *De Consolatione* was made by one 'Johannes Capellanus,' as he is called in the manuscript copies still extant in the British Museum and other libraries. The real name of the translator is, in the Christ Church MS. at Oxford, given as John Walton, Canon of Osney [Oxford], afterwards Sub-dean of York. He is said to have translated the *De Consolatione* in 1410 at the request of Dame Elizabeth Berkeley. His version was printed for the first and only time in 1525, in *The Boke of Comfort* at the monastery of Tavistock. The first three books are in eight-line stanzas of the type *ababbcbc*, and the last two in seven-

lined stanzas, Chaucer's 'rhyme royal.' A preface and a historical introduction in verse are prefixed to the whole work, and there is another short proem to the fourth and fifth books. The following lines from the first proem are interesting:—

I haue herd spek & sumwhat haue iseyne
Of diuerse men þat wonder subtyllye,
In metir sum, & sum in prose pleyne,
This book translate haue full suffisbauntly
Into English tonge word for word wel neye.
. . . . . .
To Chaucer þat is floure of rethoryk
In Englisshe tong, and excellent poete,
This wot I wel no þing may I do lyk
þogh so þat I of makynge entyrmete
And Gower þat so craftily doth trete
As in his gret book of moralite
þogh I to þeym in makyng am unmete
ȝit most I shewe it forth þat is in me.

BOETH. Book iii, metr. 2.

Hit lust to schewen be subtile song
And be þe sown of delectable strenges
How nature þat full myghti is and strong
Attempreþ þe gouernement of þinges,
This wyde worlde wiþ all his varienges
So by here lawes kepeth and susteyneth
And be bondes þat hauen no lowsynges
Ful sykerly sche byndeþ and constreyneth.

For þough þe leon of þat strange londe
þat hight pene, þe faire chaynes were
And takeþ mete be gifte of mannis hond
And of þeire sturdy maistresse haueþ feere
Of whom þei ofte stife strokes bere
And softly . . . þei suffre to be bete
Yit be þei ones lousid of þat gere,
Theire olde corage will þei not foryete.

For

For if þe hote blode of any beste
Theire foule mouthes haue made rede
Theire hyhe corage þat long haþ ben of areste
It will repayren vnto cruell hede.
He casteþ þan his chaynes over hede,
And roreth faste remembrynge as it were
His maister ferst, of whom he was adrede,
Wiþ blody teeth þan will he al totere.

The bryd þat syngeþ in þe bronche on hye
If he be closyd in a cage of tree
And lusty folke hym seruen besily
With metes þat full swete and lusty be,
If he may ones skyp out and be fre
His lusty mete he casteth vnder fote
And to þe wode ful faste sekeþ he,
And trolleþ with a wonnder lusty note.

A yerde whiche þat growen is in lenthe
With mannis hand ybowyd to þe grounde
If þat þe hond remytteþ of his strenthe
þe croppe ful sone will vp ayeen rebounde.
And whan þe sonne is passid daies stounde,
So vnder gone þe walkes of þe weste,
Ful sone haþ a priue path yfounde,
And in þe morne he ryseþ in þe est.

And so þe day bygynneþ ayeen to sprynge,
Thus euery thyng reioyeþ in his kynde,
Theire olde recourse ayeinward forto brynge,
And besily to torne & to wende.
Be thise we schall conceyuen in oure mynde
þat all thinges most hit þeire ordre swe,
And þe begynnyng ioynen to þe end
To knetten of hemself a cercle trewe.

Book iv, prose 2.

Sith þat it is of kynde a man to meue
Will noght his nature þ^{t} he schold go?
I seide, Yis, this in sothe as I byleue;

Than

Than muste he, q^{d} sche, kyndely forto do,
Meve hym vpon hys feet. *Boecius.* Hym muste so.
Thus on his feet may walken as hym oght.
This oþer nay, forwhy he haþ hem noght.

And on his hondes crepe he will therfore.
Who is of thise þe strengere wilt þou seyn?
Hold on, q^{d} I, youre processe forthirmore;
No wyght may doute, of þis I am certeyn,
But þat þis man whiche haþ his lymes tweyn
þe strenger is þan he þat wanteth bothe;
He moste confessen þat will sey ysothe.

But þan þis verrey souereyn, q^{d} sche,
To whiche þei hauen bothe effeccioun,
The good & badde, & bothe þei stonden free,
To wynne it be þaire trewe eleccioun,
The good it wynneþ be perfeccioun
Of vertu, which is men kyndely
That souereyn good schulde be wonne by.

They bad it seken in a wrongfull wyse,
And for þat skill þei wynne it noght a dele,
Be sondre lustes of þaire couetise
Whiche ben no verrey menes naturele
Whereby this good þei schuld acheuen wele.
Whether is it þus, or elles demest þow
To nayen this, wot I not why ne how.

Of þat we haue concluded vs bytwene
It is full clere & open to my sight.
þat good folk schulde alwey myghti bene,
And bad men despoyled all of myght.
Now þou be forme, q^{d} sche, remeuest right,
So þ^{t} of the I take a iugement
As doth a leche be his pacient.

When þat nature is reysed and redressed
So þ^{t} it may wiþstonde the maladie,
He hopeth þan the langour is repressed,
And þat he may be curid esily.

A century

A century and a half now passed before the next English translation of the *Consolation* made its appearance. George Colvile, or Coldewel, turned the whole into English prose, and dedicated his book to Queen Mary in 1556. It is literal, and has glosses merged in the text like Chaucer's version.

Book iii, metr. 2.

It pleaseth me to shew, with a sownynge songe, upon softe strynges, by what raynes or meanes, that is to say: by what naturall inclinacions, myghtie nature ruleth. And by what lawes nature beynge prouydente and circumspecte conserueth and kepythe the hole greate worlde. And by what lawes nature kepeth in and fastenyth all thynges with a fast and sure knot, that cannot be loosed. Althonghe the lions of Libia, hauing goodly chaines aboute their neckes doo take mete at their maysters handes, and althoughe they feare their cruell mayster and be wont to suffer beating, yet if the bloud of beastes that the same lyons haue deuoured do moist or tast in theyr mouthes, that is to saye: if they once taste bloude: then their corage that before was forgotten for lacke of vse, cometh agayne to his old nature and kynde. And with greet roryng they breke their chaynes from theyr neckes, and fyrste of all their mayster that kept them as tame felyth theyr rauenyng rage, beyng rente into peces with their blody teethe, that is to saye: they fyrste kylle their mayster, that kept them. Likewise the syngyng byrde that syngeth vpon the hygh bowghes in the woode, if she be taken and put into a strayte cage, although the dilygent cure of men delytynge in her, geueth her swete drinkes and dyuers meates wyth plesaunt labour: yet yf she chaunse to escape out of the strayt cage and seith the plesant shadowes of the woodes, beyng sorye of her strayt kepyng, ouerthrowith her metes and treadeth them vnder her fete and flyethe vnto the woodes, and there syngeth, and warbleth with swete notes and songs. Also the sprigge or bough of a tree by greate vyolence made croked boweth downe the toppe, but when the hand of him that boweth it, letteth it go at lyberte, it holdethe the toppe

vpryght

vpryght towarde heuen, that is to sai: it returnyth to his olde naturall course. The sonne lykewyse that at euen before night fallyth (as the poets faine) into the westerne waters: by a secrete path retourneth his charyot, to his accustomed rysing. So that all thynges naturall do returne and come agayne, to their naturall courses. And all naturall things reioyseth at theyr returne to their owne nature. And nothynge hath any other prescribed order, but that onely that hath ioyned the begynnyng to the ende. And hath so establyshed the worlde of it selfe: that it shall not chaunge from hys naturall course.

Book iv, prose 2.

Phil. Then if a man beynge myghtye to go vpon his fete walketh, another that lacketh the naturall offyce of hys fete laboureth to go upon his handes. Which of these may iustely be iudged more strong or myghtye? *Boe.* I say, procede in thy other sayinges, for noo man doughteth but that he that maye go by naturall offyce of his fete, is stronger then he that maye not do the same. *Phil.* Even soo the soueraygne good before spoken of is shewed indifferently, aswel unto the euyll folke as to the good folke; but the good doo optayne it by the naturall offyce of vertue, and the wycked folke do enforce themselfe to get it by sundry couytous desyres of temporall and worldly thinges, whyche is not the naturall offyce or meane to obteyne good. Dost thou thynke it other wyse? *Boe.* No truly, for the thyng, that is the consequence, is manyfest. And of these thinges that I haue graunted, it is necessarye, that good folke be myghtye, and euyll folke vnmyghtye and weake. *Phil.* Thou sayest right, and it is a sygne or iudgement that nature is recouered in the, and resisteth the dysease, as the phisicions be wonte to hope of the paciente and sycke folke.

In the Public Record Office in London there is a manuscript containing an English metrical version of all the *carmina* of the first book of the *De Consolatione* and the first two of the second book, made about 1563 by

by Sir Thomas Challoner, Ambassador to the Low Countries in 1559–60, and to Spain in 1561–65. These renderings in a variety of metres are so spirited as to make us wish Sir Thomas had translated the whole of the metres, as he says he was willing to do, if the burdensome duties of his office had allowed him. He also alludes to a prose version of the *Consolation* recently made, doubtless Colvile's.

Book i, metr. 1.

(1)

When Phoebus in the Crabb on hye
Doth make the landes to reeke
With parching heatt:
Then he that soweth the fforowes drye
Must for his harvest seeke
To Akorne meate.

(2)

Seeke never to the pleasant wood
The violettes to gether
Of purple hewe;
When wynter wyndes have waxen, woodd
And ffildes with frosen wether
Ar hore besnewe.

(3)

Nor seeke to croppe with greedy haste,
For grapes in Springingtyde,
The budding vine:
For he that will of Baccus taste,
He must till harvest byde,
That rypes the wyne.

(4)

The tymes hath God himself so bounde
To kepe their season due,
By turne assignde,

Nor

Nor suffreth them their course confounde,
Or shifte their turnes anewe
Against their kynde.

(5)
Whateuer makes to hastie waye,
Doth owte of order ronne,
And hedlong wende.
For (broken ones the sett araye)
What Rasshnes hath begonne
Forthinkes the Ende.

The first great English king had thought the translation of Boethius' work a labour well worth the doing; it *now* remained for the first great English queen to follow his example. Queen Elizabeth, amid the countless preoccupations of her high estate, found time to translate the *Consolations of Philosophy* at Windsor, and several other Latin works, in the year 1593. The manuscript in which the royal version is preserved in the Record Office is partly in the Queen's handwriting, the rest being written by a scribe to whom she dictated. In this MS. several persons bear witness that the Queen finished the work in an extraordinarily short space of time, twenty-five to twenty-seven hours of actual work, spread over a month, taking out Sundays, holidays, and absences from Windsor; the rate of work being one and a half to two hours a day. There may be some courtier's exaggeration about this. The translation is fairly accurate and very literal, and the Queen's spelling is remarkably untrammelled, as may be seen from the first specimen, which is written in her own handwriting in the MS.[1]

[1] Printed by the Early English Text Society.

Book ii,

Book iii, metr. 2.

How many raines of Causis gideth
nature powreful, by wiche the great
World with Lawes provident kepes
and tijnge, Strains with vnlousing
Knot eche thing, wel pleases with *shirllest*
note expres with drawing strings.
Thogh Aφricke Lionnes faire
giues beare[s] and takes giuen food with paw
And [of] Cruel kipar feares the wonted stripes that bare:
If bloud haue ons dyed ther Looke,
Ther courage retournes to formar state
And with rorings lowde them selues remembring,
Slacks from tied knotz ther necks;
And furius first with Cruel tothe
On kipar ragin wrathe bestowes.
The Chatting bird that sings on hiest bow,
In holow den Shut is she:
to this thogh Cups with hony lined
And largest food with tendar loue
begiling Care of man bestowes,
If yet skipping on the Eues
Spies pleasing shady wood,
With fote she treds her skatterd meat,
in Sorowing seakes the woodz alone,
And with swit vois the trees resountz.
the twig drawen ons with mighty fors
Bowing plies her top:
the same if bending hand do slack,
The top vpright doth turne.
The Son to Hesperius waters falz,
But by Secret pathe againe
His Cart turnes to Est.
Eache thing Sekes owt his propre Cours
and do reiois at retourne ther owen:
Nor ordar giuen to any remains,
onles he Joinge to end his first
And so stedyes his holie round.

Book iv,

Book iv, prose 2.

'Yf any man then that can go, and an other to whom the naturall propertie of the feete is wanting, stryving with his handes, stryves so to walke, which of these ij suppose you more worth?' 'Perform the rest if that you will, for no man doutes but he is more of force that hath the vse of nature, than he that wantes it.' 'But the greatest good,' said she, 'that is set before yll and good, the good desyre by naturall duty of vertue, the other by a scatterd desyre, and stryue to get that which is no proper gift, to such as will obtayne the greatest good. Dost thou think the contrary?' 'No,' quoth I, 'for that is playne that followes. For heerby may we gather that I graunted afore, good men to be mighty, and yll men weake.' 'Rightly hast thou discourst, And so. as phisicians ought to hope, that it is a signe of a helthy and Resisting Nature.'

The next version, written by a certain 'J. T.,' was printed in London in 1609 for Matthew Lownes, as the title-page tells us. The book is dedicated to the Countess of Dorset. The metres are in *terza rima*.

Book iii, metr. 2.

How the strict raines of al things guided are
  By powerfull nature, as the chiefest cause,
And how shee keepes with a foreseeing care
  The spacious world in order by her lawes,
And to sure knots, which nothing can vntie,
  By her strong hand all earthly motions draws:
To shew all this we purpose now to trie
  Our pleasing Verses, and our Musicke sound.
Although the Lybian Lyons often lie
  Gentle and tame in willing fetters bound,
And fearing their incensed masters wrath
  With patient lookes endure each blow and wound:
Yet if their iawes they once in blood doe bathe,
  They gaining courage with fierce noyse awake
The force, which nature in them seated hath,
  And from their neckes the broken chaines doe shake;

Then

Then he, that tam'd them first doeth feele their rage,
And torne in pieces doth their furie slake.
The bird shut vp in an unpleasing cage,
Which on the loftie trees did lately sing,
Though men her want of freedome to asswage,
Should vnto her with carefull labour bring
The sweetest meates, which they can best deuise:
Yet when on toppes of houses fluttering
The pleasing shadows of the groues shee spies;
Her hated food she scatters with her feet,
And discontented to the woods shee flies,
And their delights to tune her accents sweete.
When some strong hand doth tender plant constraine
With his debased top the ground to meete,
If it let goe, the crooked twigge againe
Vp toward heauen it selfe it streight doth raise.
Phoebus doth fall into the Westerne maine,
Yet doeth he backe returne by secret wayes,
And to the East doeth guide his chariots race.
Each thing a certaine course and lawes obeyes,
Striuing to turne backe to his proper place;
Nor any setled order can be found,
But that, which doth within it selfe embrace
The birthes and ends of all things in a round.

Book iv, prose 2.

Wherefore if one, that can go vpon his feete, doeth walke, and another, who hath not this naturall function of his feete, endeuoureth to walke by creeping vpon his hands: which of these two is deseruedly to be esteemed the stronger? Inferre the rest (quoth I) for no man doubteth, but that hee which can vse that naturall function is stronger then he which cannot. But (quoth she) the good seeke to obtaine the chiefest good, which is equally proposed to badde and good, by the naturall function of vertues, but the euill endeuour to obtaine the same by diuers concupiscences, which are not the natural function of obtaining goodnesse. Thinkest thou otherwise? No (quoth I) for it is manifest, what followeth. For by force of that which I haue already granted, it is

necessary,

necessary, that good men are powerful, and euil men weake. Thou runnest rightly (quoth she) and it is (as Physitions are wont to hope) a token of an erected and resisting nature.

In 1664 appeared a free metrical version of the whole work, the prose being rendered in eight-syllable rhyming couplets (the metre of Hudibras), and the verse in quatrains of a peculiar metre, $a^8\ b^6\ a^4\ b^6$. This was written by Harry Coningsby, a Royalist. The copy in the British Museum has a dedication, in the translator's handwriting, to Sir Thomas Hyde.

Book iii, metr. 2.

Kind Nature the whole World does guide
With Gordian knot does bind
Does certain Laws for it provide,
Which now to warble is my mind.

Although the Libyan Lions are
With easie fetters bound
And take their meat at hand, and fear
Their angry Master's whip and frown;

Yet if they once do taste of gore,
Their nature then is seen
They hideously do yell and roar
And tear the ground, and fiercely grin.

Then scorning both the whip and call,
Themselves they do unty,
And on their Masters they do fall,
Tearing them piecemeal greedily.

The bird us'd on the trees to sing,
If he in cage be penned,
Though best of dainties you him bring,
Yet to his nature he will bend.

And if that once he do get out,
And in the woods be free,
All your enticements he will flout
And chant his tunes melodiously.

If that by force a tender Plant
  Be made to ground to bend,
Do you but once let loose your hand,
  It upward presently will tend.

The Sun each night falls in the West,
  Yet still he does return,
Leaving all mortals to their rest,
  Till he again salutes the Morn.

All things oblig'd are by this law,
  And joy thereto to bend;
All do a perfect circle draw,
  Joyn their beginning with their end.

Book iv, prose 2.

To move by walking (thou 'lt not then
Deny) is natural to men.
'Tis so, said I. Nor canst deny
But 'tis the feet move naturally.
I can't. Why then, if one do use
His feet, another does refuse
This natural means, and he will goe
Upon his hands; which of these two
Wilt thou the stronger deem to be?
Make out the rest; for surely he
Who goes the true and nat'ral way,
To be the strongest all will say.
Why so, said she, the chiefest Bliss
Which equally proposed is
To good and bad, the good apply
To get by Vertue naturally;
The bad by Lusts but all in vain)
Seek their chief Good for to attain.
Dost think they can? Why no, said I;
The sequel plainly doest descry.
Then what is proved makes appear
The good are strong, the bad weak are.
'Tis right, said she, and by this scope
I do (as wont Physicians) hope

Good

Good strength of nature, since I find
To Knowledge a so ready mind.

In 1674, at Oxford, there appeared a version by 'A Lover of Truth and Virtue,' printed for Richard Davis. The rendering of Boethius Book iii. metr. 2, is not given here, being copied directly from the version of 1609 (see above).

Book iv, prose 2.

If any one then should Go on his Feet, and another, who wants this Natural Office of Feet, should endeavour to Go on his Hands, who of these might be rightly judg'd to be the more Able man? Proceed, said I, for it is unquestionable, that he who has a Power to perform those Actions, which Nature requires, has more Strength than he, who is not Able so to do. But the soveraign Good, which All men Aim at, Good, and Bad, Good men Attein unto by the Natural Office of Virtues: but the Wicked earnestly after this very Good by gratifying their various Lusts, and unruly Affections, which is not the Office that Nature requires us to perform, that we may Attein to the True Good. Dost thou think otherwise? No surely, said I: the Consequence also is very clear. For from what I have granted, it must of necessity follow that Good men are Powerful, that Wicked men are altogether Feeble, and Impotent. Thou dost well, quoth she, thus to run before me; and this, as Phisitians are wont to hope, is a sign that Nature gathers Strength, and begins to resist the Disease.

In 1695, a version was published in London, made by Richard, Lord Viscount Preston. He mentions in his preface the version of Chaucer, that of 1609, and that of 1674. In his verses we find an irregular metre, then much in vogue.

Book iii, metr. 2.

I'll take my Harp, and touch each warbling String,
And I, her Bard, will sing

Of

Of Nature's powerful Hand
Which doth with Reins the Universe command.
My Song shall comprehend each Law,
By which she doth all Beings bind, and awe,
I'll read her mighty Pandects o'r,
My Eye into each Page shall look
Of the Elephantine Book,
And I her choicest Secrets will explore.
Although the Punic Lion should forget
Himself, and to a servile Chain submit,
Though the same Hand which gave him Meat,
Presumes the noble Beast to beat,
Although he meanly then looks low,
And seems to dread his haughty Keeper's Brow,
Yet if the Blood his Face o'r spread,
Which that imperious Blow did shed.
His waken'd Courage doth arise,
And he remembers that by Right he is
The powerful Monarch of the Lawns and Wood.
Asham'd of his base Fears, he loud doth cry,
His Plaints invade the Sky,
He breaks his Chain, and meets his Liberty,
And his presuming Keeper shall
A bloody Victim to his Fury fall.
When Philomel, which from the Wood
The sleeping Sun was wont to serenade,
Into her Prison is betray'd;
Although she have the choicest Food
Which Man can for his Taste invent,
Yet that will not prevent;
But if she from the Prison view the Shade
Of that delightful Grove,
Where she had often mourn'd her Tragick Love,
The Meats prepar'd she doth despise,
Charm'd with the Woods which entertain her Thoughts and Eyes,
She nothing but the Woods affects,
And to their Praise her choicest Notes directs.
The Sapling, forc'd by a strong Hand,

His tender Top doth downward bend:
But if that Hand doth it remit,
It strait toward Heaven again lifts up its Head.
The Sun in the Hesperian Main
At Night his Royal Bed doth make,
But by a secret Path again
His wonted Journey towards the East doth take.
All Things regard their Origine,
And gladly thither would retreat;
To nothing certain Order doth remain
But that which makes the End to meet
With its Beginning, and a Round to be
Fix'd on the Basis of Stability.

Book iv, prose 2.

Ph. If then he who is able to use his Feet walks, and if another to whom this natural Office of the Feet is wanting, creeping upon his Hands, doth endeavour to walk, which of these, by right, ought to be esteemed more able? *Bo.* Proceed with what remains; for no one doubteth but he who is able to move naturally upon his Feet, is more powerful than he who cannot. *Ph.* But the Sovereign Good, which even the Vertuous and Impious propose to themselves as their End, by the one Party is sought by the natural means of Vertue, whilst the other endeavours after it by various and differing Desires of earthly things, which is not the natural way of obtaining it; dost thou think otherwise? *Bo.* No; for the Consequence is plain, and it appears out of that which before I granted, which was, that the Good were endowed with Power and Might, and that the evil Men were destitute of it. *Ph.* Thou dost rightly run before me; and it is a good Sign, as Physicians observe, when Nature exerts herself, and resists the Malady.

During the eighteenth century there appeared four versions, none of which show more than moderate merit, and a few lines from the verse in each case will suffice as a specimen.

By William Causton, London, 1730. in heroic couplets.

Book iii.

Book iii, metr. 2.

Pleas'd is the Muse to sing in artless verse
The power of Nature, and her Laws rehearse;
How the presiding Dame, with steady reins,
The giddy circle of the spheres retains;
How by her nod, as by a magic spell,
All things are aw'd nor dare nor can rebel.
The ranging monarch of the Libyan plains,
Tam'd by confinement and subdu'd by chains,
Seems all his brutal fierceness to forego,
Receives the food his keeper's hands bestow,
Beholds the lifted staff, and dreads the falling blow.
But soon provok'd by wounds and flowing gore,
The monster rouses and begins to roar;
Disdains his prison and contemns his chain,
With native pride disowns his tyrant's reign,
Devours the wretch, and seeks the savage wilds again.

By the Rev. Philip Ridpath, Nonconformist minister, who alludes in his dedicatory epistle to the translations by King Alfred and Queen Elizabeth, and gives a Life of Boethius. London, 1785. He uses the octosyllabic couplet, much affected by Nonconformists of his day.

I 'll tune my voice, my harp I 'll string,
And Nature's wondrous laws I 'll sing,
That o'er the world's wide circuit reign,
And govern this discordant scene.
The lion, on the Libyan plain,
Submits to wear a servile chain;
Devours in peace his offer'd cheer,
And dreads his keeper's lash severe.
But, torn by stripes, should the warm gore
Stream his majestick visage o'er,
His noble nature straight returns,
With all his native rage he burns.
His awful roar alarms the plain,
Furious he bounds and bursts his chain,
Springs on his hapless keeper first
And with his blood allays his thirst.

By Robert Duncan, who employs the blank verse that his countryman Thompson had made fashionable again, Edinburgh, 1789.

> How pow'rful nature plies the mighty reins
> Of th' Universe; by what eternal laws
> Her providence preserves the boundless world,
> And binds its parts with undissolved tie,
> Be this the subject of the tuneful lyre.
> Though Libyan lions beauteous chains may wear,
> And from their keeper's hands receive their food,
> And dread the lashes, which they use to bear;
> If blood by chance hath stain'd their horrid mouth,
> Their native temper long disus'd returns,
> And with loud roar they call themselves to mind,
> Release their necks from the dissolved chains,
> And first their master, torn with cruel tooth,
> With his own blood allays their mad'ning rage.

An anonymous translation of the verses of Boethius, in octosyllabic quatrains, with the Latin printed opposite, and a translation of Peter Berty's preface, appeared in 1792, London.

> How pow'rfully doth nature sway
> By prudent vig'rous laws, and give
> A promptitude still to obey
> Throughout the earth on which we live. . . .
>
> Although a Lion, us'd to bear
> A glitt'ring chain, and fed by hand,
> May, aw'd through custom, crouch for fear,
> If over him his keeper stand;
>
> Yet if he once but taste of blood,
> How doth his native fury rise.
> No longer then to be withstood,
> The first upon his master flies.

The last translation of the *Consolations* into English was made by H. R. James, London, 1897.

SUMMARY OF CONTENTS

BOOK I.

CHAPTERS I–VI.

First comes the Historical Introduction (chap. i). While Boethius is lying in the dungeon lamenting his hard lot and vanished happiness, there appears to him divine PHILOSOPHY, the spirit of WISDOM, who raises him up and bids him look on her. He then recognizes in her his old teacher whom he had known in his happier days. She proceeds to show him that his misfortune arises from his neglect of her precepts, and his trust in the promises of fickle Fortune; and she undertakes to cure him of his melancholy.

BOOK II.

CHAPTERS VII–XXI.

Philosophy tells Boethius that what he once accounted happiness was not really such; that he is not the first to suffer a reverse of fortune; that worldly joys are deceitful. Fortune changes, and men must also change with her. Boethius owes his misfortune to his desire for worldly happiness. In reply, Boethius confesses his wrong and is in despair. Philosophy then points out that he is not really unhappy, for his sorrows will pass away as his riches have done. He has many blessings left—his noble father-in-law Symmachus, his wife, and his two sons. Let him seek happiness within himself, not outside; for he does wrong to set his heart on inferior creatures, over which he has no right of possession. God wishes man to rule all other creatures, but man makes himself their slave. Riches bring enemies; and power, often coming to very bad men, is not in its nature

good

good. As for fame, even if it be worldwide it has but a narrow range, this earth being a mere speck in the universe. When Fortune turns her back on a man she does him a real service, in enabling him to find the way to goodness.

BOOK III.

Chapters XXII–XXXV.

Boethius admits that he is greatly comforted by the words of Philosophy, but he would like to hear more of her healing doctrine. In what does true happiness consist? Thereupon Philosophy discusses the nature of the Supreme Good, and shows how all men, even the worst, long to reach it. This Good does not lie in power, nor in wealth, nor in fame, nor in high birth, nor in carnal pleasure; no, it lies in God; and therefore True Happiness lies in Him. Men can participate in happiness, and thereby attain to divinity. Evil has no existence, for God, who can do all things, cannot do evil.

BOOK IV.

Chapters XXXVI–XL.

Boethius says he cannot quite cease to be unhappy until he knows why God suffers evil to exist, or why, suffering it, He does not punish evil-doers, instead of allowing them to flourish, while wisdom and other virtues go dishonoured. Philosophy replies that Boethius is mistaken, for the wicked have no real power, and never reach the Supreme Good, and moreover are punished. Punishment is a real benefit to the wrong-doer. Then the discussion leads to the subject of Fate and Providence. Providence is the supreme Reason that plans and orders all things; Fate is the instrument which links them together, and sets them in motion, under Providence.

BOOK V.

Chapters XL to End.

Philosophy discusses the coexistence of divine foreknowledge and man's free-will; and finally discourses on the nature of God.

King Alfred's Version of the Consolations of Boethius

PROEM

King Alfred was the interpreter of this book, and turned it from book Latin into English, as it is now done. Now he set forth word by word, now sense from sense, as clearly and intelligently as he was able, in the various and manifold worldly cares that oft troubled him both in mind and in body. These cares are very hard for us to reckon, that in his days came upon the kingdoms to which he had succeeded, and yet when he had studied this book and turned it from Latin into English prose, he wrought it up once more into verse, as it is now done. And now he prayeth and in God's name beseecheth every man that careth to read this book, to pray for him, and not to blame him if he understand it more rightly than he (Alfred) could. For every man must, according to the measure of his understanding and leisure, speak what he speaketh and do what he doeth.

Boethius and Theodoric

I

IN THE days when the Goths out of the land of Scythia had raised war against the Roman empire, and under their kings Rædgod and Alaric had stormed Rome, and won all the realm of Italy from the mountains even to the island of Sicily, then, after those kings, did Theodoric hold the same empire in sway. Theodoric was an Amuling and a Christian, though he held fast to the Arian heresy. To the Romans he promised his friendship, and that they should keep their old rights; but he kept that promise very basely, and his end was grievous and full of sin, in that his countless crimes were increased by the murder of Pope John. At that time there lived a consul, a chief we should now call him, whose name was Boethius, a man of book-learning and in worldly life most truly wise. He, perceiving the manifold wrongs wrought by Theodoric upon the Christian faith and upon the chief men of the Romans, began to recall the glad times and immemorial rights they had once

 enjoyed

enjoyed under the Caesars, their ancient lords. And so meditating, he began to muse and cast about within himself how he might wrest the sovereignty from the unrighteous king and restore it to them of the true faith and of righteous life. Wherefore, sending word privily to the Caesar at Constantinople, the chief city of the Greeks and the seat of their kings, because this Caesar was of the kin of the ancient lords of the Romans, he prayed him to help them back to their Christian faith and their old laws. But cruel King Theodoric heard of these designs, and straightway commanded that Boethius be thrust into a dungeon and kept fast therein. Now when this good man fell into so great straits he waxed sore of mind, by so much the more that he had once known happier days. In the prison he could find no comfort; falling down, grovelling on his face he lay sorrowing on the floor, in deep despair, and began to weep over himself, and to sing, and this was his song:

II

THE songs that I, poor exile, once sang so merrily I must now croon sadly sighing, and make of unmeet words. I who of old did oft so deftly weave them, now even the fitting words I fit awry, weeping aye and sobbing. 'Tis faithless prosperity hath dimmed my sight, blinding me and forsaking me in this sunless cell, and that to which I ever trusted most hath robbed me of all my joy. It hath turned its back

back upon me and utterly fled from me. Why, oh why, did my friends tell me I was a happy man? How can he be happy that cannot abide in happiness?

III

WHEN I had sung thus plaintively, saith Boethius, there entered unto me divine Philosophy, who, addressing words of greeting to my mournful mind, said, 'Art thou not the man that was once nourished and taught in my school? Then how comes it that thou art thus grievously oppressed with these worldly sorrows? Unless, methinks, thou hast too soon forgotten the weapons that once I gave thee.' Then, lifting up her voice, she cried, 'Depart from the mind of my servant, ye worldly cares accursed, for ye are the worst of foes, and suffer him to return again to my teachings.' And she drew nearer unto my grieving intelligence, saith Boethius, and raised it up somewhat from its prostrate state; then, drying its eyes, she asked it cheerily whether it knew again its foster-mother. With that the Mind turned towards her and forthwith clearly recognized his own mother, that same Philosophy that long before had trained and taught him. And perceiving that th· mantle of her doctrine was much rent and torn by the hands of foolish men, he asked her how this came about. And Philosophy made answer and said that her disciples had torn her thus, being minded to possess

her altogether. But of a truth they will gather much folly by their presumption and vainglory unless every one of them shall turn again to her healing care.

Here Philosophy began to take pity on the Mind's feebleness, and fell to singing, and these were her words: 'Ah, how deep the pit in which the mind labours when it is assailed by the hardships of this life! *If it forget its own light* (*that is, joy eternal*), *and press on to unfamiliar darkness* (*that is, the cares of this world*), *as this Mind now doth, naught else shall it know but sorrow.*'

After that Philosophy, that is to say, the Spirit of Reason, had sung this song, she began again to speak, and she said to the Mind, 'I see thou hast need of comfort rather than of woful words. Wherefore, if only thou wilt show shame for thine error, I will soon begin to raise thee up and carry thee with me to heaven.'

'What,' answered the sorrow-stricken Mind, 'and is this the boon and the reward thou didst always promise them that would obey thee? Is this wise Plato's saw thou toldest me of long ago, that without righteousness no power was rightful? Dost thou mark how the righteous are hated and oppressed because they are resolved to do thy will, and how the unrighteous are exalted by reason of their misdeeds and their self-esteem? Even that they may do their wicked will the sooner, they are furthered with gifts and possessions. Therefore I will now call earnestly upon God.'

Then he began to sing, and these were the words of his song:

'O THOU

IV

'O THOU Creator of heaven and earth, that rulest on the eternal throne, Thou that makest the heavens to turn in swift course, and the stars to obey Thee, and the sun with his shining beams to quench the darkness of black night, (so too the moon with her pale beam maketh the stars to grow dim in the heaven, and at times robbeth the sun of his light, coming between him and us men; and that bright star too that we call the morning star, and which by its other name we call the evening star), Thou that givest short hours to the days of winter, and longer ones to those of summer, Thou that in autumn with the strong north-east wind spoilest the trees of their leaves, and again in spring givest them fresh ones with the soft south-west winds, lo! all creatures do Thy will, and keep the ordinances of Thy commandments, save man only; he setteth Thee at naught.

'O Almighty Creator and Ruler of all things, help now Thy poor people! Wherefore, O Lord, hast Thou ever suffered that Fate should change as she doth, for she oppresseth the innocent and harmeth not the guilty at all? The wicked sit on thrones, and trample the saints under their feet; bright virtues abide in hiding, and the unrighteous mock the righteous. False swearing bringeth no harm to men, nor false guile that is cloaked with deceits. Wherefore well-nigh all men shall turn to doubt, if Fate shall change according

according to the will of wicked men, and Thou wilt not check her.

'O my Lord, Thou that beholdest all that Thou hast made, look now in Thy lovingkindness upon this miserable earth, and also upon all mankind, for that at this present it is all struggling with the waves of this world.'

V

WHILE the Mind was thus uttering his plaint and singing this song, Philosophy (that is to say, Reason) watched him with a cheerful eye, in no wise cast down for his melancholy, and she said unto him, 'No sooner did I see thee lamenting thus and sorrowing than I perceived that thou hadst departed from thy native home—that is to say, from my teachings. Thou didst depart from it when thou didst forsake thy firm belief, and bethink thee that Fate ruled this world at her own pleasure, respectless of God's will or leave, or of the deeds of men. I knew that thou hadst departed therefrom, but how far I knew not, until thou thyself didst make all clear to me in thy song of sorrow. But though thou hast indeed wandered farther than ever, yet art thou not utterly banished from thine home, though far astray. No one else hath led thee into error; 'twas thyself alone, by thine own heedlessness; nor would any man be led to expect this of thee if thou wouldst but remember thy birth and citizenship as the world goes,

goes, or again, according to the spirit, of what fellowship thou wast in mind and understanding; for thou art one of the righteous and upright in purpose, *that are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem.* From hence, that is, from his righteous purpose, no man is ever banished save he himself so chooseth. Wheresoever he be, he hath that ever with him, and having it he is with his own kin and his own fellow-citizens in his own land, being in the company of the righteous. Whosoever then is worthy to be in their service hath perfect freedom.

'Nor do I shun this lowly and this foul dwelling, if only I find thee wise, nor do I care for walls wrought with glass, nor for thrones adorned with gold and gems, nor do I care so much for books written in letters of gold, as I care for a righteous will in thee. What I seek here is not books, but that which understands books, to wit, thy mind. Very rightly didst thou lament the injustice of Fate, both in the exalted power of the unrighteous and in mine own dishonour and neglect, and in the licence of the wicked as regards the prosperity of this world. But as both thine indignation and thy grief have made thee so desponding, I may not answer thee till the time be come. *For whatsoever man shall begin untimely hath no perfect ending.*

'When the sun's beams shine hottest in the month of August he is foolish that would commit any seed to the dry furrows; so too is he that would look for flowers during the storms of winter. Nor canst thou

press

press wine in midwinter, though thou wouldst fain drink of the warm must.'

Then Philosophy cried aloud and said, 'May I then put thy fixed belief to the proof, that I may thereby get to know by what means and in what manner I am to cure thee?'

'Prove me as thou wilt,' answered the Mind.

Then said Philosophy, 'Dost thou believe that Fate rules this world, or that aught of good may happen without a Cause?'

'I do not believe,' replied the Mind, 'that in that case anything could happen in such orderly fashion; nay, of a truth I know that God is the controller of His own work, and from that true faith I have never swerved.'

Then again Philosophy answered and said, 'It was about this same thing thou wast singing but a little while ago, that each creature knew from God its due season, and fulfilled its due course, save only man. Wherefore I marvel beyond measure what ails thee, and why thou complainest, holding this faith. But let us consider the matter yet more deeply. I do not fully know which of thy doubts remain; but thou sayest thou hast no doubt that God guideth this world; tell me then, how would He like it to be?'

M. I can hardly understand thy question, yet thou sayest I am to answer thee.

P. Dost think I know not the danger of that confusion in which thou art wrapt around? Come, tell me what is the end that every beginning is minded to have?

M. I knew

M. I knew it once, but this sorrow of mine has reft me of the memory of it.

P. Knowest thou whence everything comes?

M. I know that everything comes from God.*

P. How can it be that, knowing the beginning, thou knowest not the end also? Confusions may distract the mind, but cannot rob it of its understanding. And I would have thee tell me whether thou knowest what thou art thyself?

M. I know that I belong to living men, intelligent, yet doomed to die.

P. Dost thou know aught else concerning thyself, besides this thou hast said?

M. Naught else do I know.

P. Now I understand thy melancholy, seeing that thou thyself knowest not what thy nature is; and I know how to cure thee. Thou hast said that thou wast an outcast and bereft of all good, in that thou knewest not what thou wast, and thereby thou didst make known thine ignorance of the end that every beginning has in view, when thou didst think that unguided and reckless men were the happy ones and the rulers of this world. Furthermore, thou didst make known that thou knewest not with what guidance God ruleth this world, or how He would like it to be ordered, saying that thy belief was that this harsh Fate governs the world apart from the design of God. Indeed, there was great risk that thou shouldst think so, for not only wast thou in boundless misfortune, but thou hadst even well-nigh perished withal. Thank God

therefore

therefore that He hath succoured thee, and that I have not utterly forsaken thine understanding. Now that thou believest that, apart from God's design, Fate cannot by herself guide the world, we have fuel for thy salvation. Thou needest fear naught now, for from the little spark which thou settest to the tinder the light of life has shone upon thee. But it is not yet the time for me to hearten thee yet farther, for it is the habit of every mind to follow falsehood when once it hath forsaken the dictates of truth. From this have begun to gather the mists that perplex the understanding and utterly confound the true sight, even such mists as are now over thy mind. But first I must dissipate them, that afterwards I may the more easily be able to bring the true light unto thee.

VI

'BEHOLD the sun and the other heavenly bodies; when black clouds come before them, they can no longer give out their light. So too at times the south wind in fierce storms stirreth up the sea that before was in calm weather as clear as glass to look upon; but as soon as it is troubled by the surging waves it very quickly groweth gloomy, that was but now so smiling to behold. Lo, the brook also swerveth from its right course, when a great rock rolling from the high mountain falleth into it, parting its waters, and damming up its proper course. Even

Even so the gloom of thy troubled mind withstandeth the light of my teaching. But, if thou art desirous in good faith to know the true light, put away from thee evil joys and unprofitable, and also useless miseries and the evil dread of this world. That is to say, exalt not thyself beyond measure in thine health and happiness, nor do thou again despair of all good in any adversity, for the mind is ever bound about with confusion in which either of these two ills holdeth sway.'

VII

HEREUPON Philosophy was silent a little while until she had read the inmost thoughts of the Mind; and having read them she said, 'If I have rightly read thy sadness, it comes to this, that thou hast utterly lost the worldly prosperity thou hadst once, and thou art now grieving over thy changed lot. I perceive clearly enough that worldly prosperity cunningly lures with all manner of sweets the mind that it wishes at last to beguile most; and then in the end it brings the mind when she least weeneth to despair and deepest sorrow. If thou wilt know whence cometh prosperity, thou mayest observe that it comes from covetousness of worldly goods. Next, if thou wilt learn its nature, know that it remains true to no man. By this thou mayest understand that thou hadst no joy when fortune was thine, and in losing it thou hast suffered no loss thereof. I thought I long ago had

had taught thee to recognize it, and I knew thou didst shrink from it, even when thou hadst it, though thou didst profit thereby. Further, I knew thou didst oft repeat my sayings against it, but I know that no habit can be changed in a man without his mind being in some measure affected, and therefore thou art now bereft of thy peace of mind.

'O Mind, what has cast thee into this sorrow and trouble? Thinkest thou this is something new or in any way unwonted that has come upon thee, such as has never ailed man before? If thou thinkest it thine own fault that thy worldly prosperity is gone, then art thou in error, for its ways are even so. In thee it but fulfilled its own nature, and by its changing it made known its own instability. When it most flattered thee, it was the very same as it now is, though it was enticing thee to an unreal happiness. Now hast thou perceived the fickle faith of blind pleasure; yet that which is now plain to thee is still hidden from many others. Now thou knowest the ways of worldly prosperity, and how it changeth. If then it is thy wish to be in its service, and thou likest its nature, why dost thou mourn so grievously? Why not change also in its company? If thou wouldst avoid its treachery, do thou despise it and drive it from thee, for it is tempting thee to thy ruin. That same prosperity, the loss of which thou art grieving over, would have left thee in peace, hadst thou but refused to accept it; and now it hath forsaken thee of its own will, not of thine, being such that no man loseth it without

without grief. Dost thou then count a thing so precious and so dear which is neither safe to hold nor easy to part with, and which, when it shall slip away from a man, he shall let go with the greatest wound to his mind? Since therefore thou mayest not keep the joys of this world after thy will, and they bring thee to sorrow when they vanish from thee, why else do they come save as a foretokening of sorrow and pangs unrelieved? Not on worldly wealth alone should a man fix his thoughts while he possesses it, but every prudent mind will consider the end thereof, and guard equally against its threats and its blandishments. If however thou art desirous to be its servant, thou must needs do cheerfully what belongs to its service, in obedience to its nature and its will; and, if thou wouldst have it put on other garb than is its will and its wont, art thou not then doing thyself dishonour, in that thou art rebelling against the lordship thou thyself hast freely chosen? And nevertheless thou shalt not be able to change its ways and kind. Surely thou knowest that if thou spreadest out thy boat's sail to the wind thou leavest all thy journey to the wind's mercy. So too if thou give thyself over to the service of worldly prosperity it is but right that thou shouldst follow its ways. Thinkest thou that thou canst turn back the whirling wheel in its course? No more canst thou turn aside the changing course of worldly riches.

'I would speak still further with thee of riches. Why didst thou reproach me just now that thou hadst lost

lost thy riches for my sake? Why dost thou frown on me, as if for my sake bereft of thine own, both wealth and honour, both of which thou hadst from me when they were bestowed upon thee? Come, plead thy case before whatsoever judge thou wilt; and if thou canst prove that any mortal man ever owned anything I will restore to thee whatsoever thou canst prove to have been thine own. I received thee foolish and untaught when first thou camest into the world, and I trained and taught thee, and brought thee to that wisdom wherewith thou didst win those worldly honours from which thou hast parted in such sorrow. Thou shouldst rather be thankful that thou hast well enjoyed my gifts, and not deem that thou hast lost aught of thine own. What complaint then hast thou against me? Have I ever robbed thee of any of the gifts which I gave thee? Every true blessing and every true honour is mine own servant, and, where I am, there are they too with me. Be well assured that, if that had been thine own wealth the loss of which thou mournest, thou couldst never have lost it. Oh how evilly I am entreated of many worldly men, in that I may not rule mine own servants! The sky may bring bright days, and anon hide the light in darkness; the year may bring flowers, and the same year take them away again; the sea may enjoy her gentle heaving, and all things created may follow their course and fulfil their desire, save me alone. I only am deprived of mine own wont and use, and forced to strange ones through the unsated avarice of worldly men, who in their greed have robbed

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me of the name I should rightly have, the name, that is, of blessing and honour; this they have wrested from me. Moreover, they have given me over to their evil practices, and made me minister to their false blessings, so that I cannot with my servants fulfil my service as all other creatures do. Now my servants are knowledge and skill of various kinds, and true riches; with these I have ever been wont to disport, and with them I sweep over the whole heavens. The lowest I raise up to the highest, and the highest I put in the lowest place; that is, the lowly I exalt to heaven, and bring blessings down from heaven unto the lowly. *When I rise aloft with these my servants, we look down upon the storms of this world, even as the eagle does when he soars in stormy weather above the clouds where no storm can harm him.* So would I have thee too, O Mind, come up to us if it please thee, on condition of returning again with us to earth to help good men. Thou knowest my ways, how I am ever earnest to succour the good in their need. Dost thou know how I helped Croesus the Greek king in his need, when Cyrus king of the Persians had taken him captive and was minded to burn him? When they cast him into the fire I set him free with rain from heaven. *But thou wast too confident in thy righteousness and in thy good purpose, thinking that no unrighteous thing could come upon thee, and desiring to have the reward of all thy good works here in this life.* How couldst thou dwell in the midst of a nation, and not suffer the same as other men? How live in the midst

midst of change and not thyself be changed? What do the poets sing of this world but the various changes thereof? And who art thou, not to change with it? What is it to thee how thou changest, since I am always with thee? It was even better for thee thus to change, that thou shouldst not grow too fond of worldly riches, and cease to expect still better things.

'Though the covetous man gain riches in number as the grains of sand *by these sea-cliffs*, or as the stars that shine of dark nights, he never leaveth to bewail his poverty; and though God glut the desire of wealthy men with gold and silver and all manner of precious things, yet is the thirst of their greed never quenched, for its bottomless abyss hath many empty chambers yet to fill. Who can ever give enough to the frenzy of the covetous? The more that is given him the greater his desire.

'*How wilt thou answer Riches if she say to thee, "Why dost thou reproach me, O Mind? Why art thou enraged against me? In what have I angered thee? 'Twas thou that first desiredst me, not I thee; thou didst set me on the throne of thy Creator, when thou lookedst to me for the good thou shouldst seek from Him. Thou sayest I have deceived thee, but I may rather answer that thou hast deceived me, seeing that by reason of thy lust and thy greed the Creator of all things hath been forced to turn away from me. Thou art indeed more guilty than I, both for thine own wicked lusts and because owing to thee I am not able to do the will of my Maker. He lent*

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me to thee to enjoy in accordance with His Commandments, and not to perform the will of thine unlawful greed."

'*Answer us both now,*' *said Philosophy,* '*as thou wilt; both of us await thine answer.*'

VIII

THEN said the Mind, 'I confess myself guilty on every point, and I am so sore stricken with remorse for my sin, that I cannot answer you.'

Again Philosophy spake, 'It is still by reason of thine unrighteousness that thou art brought nearly to despair, and I would have thee not despair, but be ashamed of thine error. For he who despairs is without hope, while he who is ashamed is in the way to repentance. If thou wilt but call to mind all the worldly honours thou hast received since thy birth to this day, and reckon up the joys against the sorrows, thou canst not well say thou art poor and unhappy, for I took thee when young, untrained, and untaught, and made thee my child and brought thee up in my discipline. How then is it possible to speak of thee as aught but most happy, when thou wast dear to me ere thou knewest me, and before thou knewest my discipline and my ways, and before I taught thee in thy youth such wisdom as is hidden from many an older sage, and when I furthered thee with my teachings so that thou

wast chosen of men to be a judge? If however thou wilt say thou art unhappy because thou no longer hast the fleeting honours and joys that thou once didst have, still thou art not unblest, for thy present woe will pass away even as thou sayest thy joys have passed. Dost thou think such change of state and sadness of mood come to thee alone, and have never befallen, nor will befall, any other man? Or dost thou think that in any human mind there can be aught enduring and without change? If for a while anything endures in a man, death snatches it away, and its place knows it no more. And what are worldly riches but a foretokening of death? For death cometh to no other purpose but to take life. So also riches come to a man to rob him of that which is dearest to him in the world, and this they do when they depart from him. Tell me, O Mind, since naught in this life may endure unchanging, which deemest thou the better? Art thou to despise these earthly joys, and willingly give them up without a pang, or to wait till they give thee up and leave thee sorrowing?'

IX

THEN Philosophy began to sing and chaunted thus: 'When the sun shineth brightest in the cloudless heaven, he dimmeth the light of all the stars, for their brightness is as nothing compared with his. When the south-west breeze softly bloweth, the flowers of the field grow apace, but when the

the strong wind cometh out of the north-east, right soon it destroyeth the beauty of the rose. Again, the north wind in its fury lasheth the calm ocean. Alas! there is nothing in the world that endureth firmly for ever!'

X

THEN said Boethius, 'O Philosophy, thou that art the mother of all virtues, I cannot gainsay thee nor deny what thou wast saying to me just now, for it is all true. I understand now that my happiness and the prosperity which I erstwhile accounted happiness are not such, seeing that they so speedily depart. What troubles me most when I ponder the matter narrowly is my firm persuasion that the greatest unhappiness in this present life is for a man to have happiness, and then to lose it.'

Then answered Philosophy, that is to say Reason, 'Of a truth thou shouldst not blame thy fate and thy prosperity, as thou art minded to do, for the loss of false joys that thou art suffering, because thou art wrong in thinking thyself unhappy. But if it be the loss of fancied joys that hath thus troubled and saddened thee I can clearly prove to thee that thou still hast the greater part of the happiness that once was thine. Tell me now, canst thou with justice bewail thy misfortune, as if good fortune had utterly forsaken thee? Why, thou hast still the most precious part of all that thou didst hold most worth having. How then canst thou

bewail the worse and more harmful part, having kept the more precious? Come, thou knowest that the flower of mankind and the greatest honour to thyself is still living, even thy wife's father, Symmachus. He is yet hale and hearty, and hath enough of all good things, and I know that thou wouldst not stick to lay down thy life for him, if thou wert to see him in any danger, for the man is full of wisdom and goodly parts, and free enough from all earthly cares, albeit he is much grieved for thy hardships and thy captivity. Is not thy wife also living, daughter of this same Symmachus, a virtuous and modest lady, beyond all women in chastity? All the good in her I may sum up in a word: that in all her ways she is her father's daughter. For thee she lives, for thee alone, as she loves nothing else but thee; every blessing of this life is hers, but all hath she scorned for thy sake, refusing all, not having thee; that is her only want. By reason of thine absence all that she hath seems naught to her, for in her great love for thee she is in despair and well-nigh dead with weeping and sorrow. Again, let us take thy two sons. They are magistrates and senators; in them are manifest the gifts and virtues of their father and of their forefathers, as far as young men may resemble their elders. Therefore I wonder that thou canst not understand that thou art still very fortunate, being alive and in good health. Surely to be alive and well is the greatest gift mortal man may have, and besides this thou hast all those gifts that I have just told over to thee. Indeed, these are even more precious to a man than life itself; for

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many a man would rather die himself than see his wife and children die. Why then art thou disposed to weep without cause? As yet thou canst not in aught reproach thy fate, nor put the blame upon thy life; nor art thou, as thou thinkest, utterly undone. No unbearable affliction hath yet befallen thee, for thine anchor is still fast in the ground, those noblemen, I mean, that we were speaking of. They will not suffer thee to despair of this present life; and furthermore, *thine own faith and the divine love* and hope, *these three will not suffer thee to despair of the life eternal.*'

To this the sorrowing Mind made answer, saying, 'Oh, would that the anchors were as fast and enduring, *in respect of God and of the world*, as thou sayest! Then could I far more easily bear such adversities as might befall me, for they all seem lighter as long as the anchors hold. But nevertheless thou mayest perceive how my happiness and worldly honour are changed.'

XI

THEN answered Philosophy, that is Reason, and said, 'Indeed I thought to have raised thee somewhat from thy sadness, and almost restored thee to the same position that thou once hadst, but thou art even yet too sated with that which is left thee, and therefore thou art filled with loathing. Yet I cannot suffer thy lamentation for the little thou hast lost; for ever with weeping and dolour thou art complaining

complaining if thou failest to get anything on which thy desire is set, however small it be. What man ever lived in this life or shall live after us in this world, and nothing cross his will, whether little or great? Very narrow and very paltry is human happiness, for either it cometh not to any man, or abideth not steadily with him such as it was when it came; this I will show more clearly later on.

'We know that many have worldly riches enough, but they are ashamed of their wealth if they are not as well born as they would desire. Some again are noble and famous from their high birth, but they are oppressed and saddened by their base estate and their poverty, so that they would rather be of mean birth than so poor, were it but in their power. Many are both well born and well endowed, yet are joyless, being wedded to an ill-matched or unpleasing wife. Many are happy enough in their marriage, but being childless must leave all the wealth they amass to strangers to enjoy, and therefore they are sad. Some have children enough, but these are perhaps weakly, or wicked and ignoble, or they die young, so that their parents sorrow for them all their days. Therefore no man may in this present life altogether withstand Fate; for even if he have nothing now to grieve about, yet he may grieve not to know what his future will be, whether good or evil, even as thou also didst not know; and moreover, that which he enjoys so happily while he hath it, he dreads to lose. Show me, I pray thee, the man who to thy mind is most happy, and who is most given over to self-indulgence;

indulgence; I will soon cause thee to see that he is often exceedingly put out by the veriest trifles if anything, however slight, thwart his will or his habits, unless he can beckon every one to run at his bidding. A very little thing may make the happiest of men in this world believe his happiness to be impaired or altogether lost. Thou art thinking now, for instance, that thou art very unhappy, and yet I know that many a man would fancy himself raised up to heaven if he had any part of the happiness which is still remaining to thee. Why, the place where thou art now imprisoned, and which thou callest exile, is a home to them that were born there, and also to them that live in it by choice. Nothing is bad, unless a man think it bad; and though it be hard to bear and adverse, yet is it happiness if a man does it cheerfully and bears it with patience. Few are so wise as not to wish in their impatience that their fortune may be changed. With the sweets of this world much bitterness is mingled; though they seem desirable, yet a man cannot keep them, once they begin to flee from him. Is it not then plain that worldly happiness is a poor thing? It is unable to satisfy poor man, who ever desireth what he hath not at the time, and even with men of patience and of sober life it will never long abide.

'Why then do ye seek outside yourselves the happiness ye have planted within you by the divine power? But ye know not what ye do, being in error. I will show you in a few words what is the pinnacle of all happiness; towards which I know that thou, O Mind, wilt

wilt hasten before even thou perceivest it; it is Goodness. What is more precious to thee than thyself? Nothing, I think thou wilt say. Well I know that if thou hadst full governance of thyself thou wouldst have something within thee which thou wouldst never willingly give up, and which Fate could not wrest from thee. Let me remind thee that there is in this present life no other happiness but Wisdom, for nothing can make men lose it; and that possession which can never be lost is better than that which can, and some day must. Is it not now quite clearly proven that Fate can give thee no happiness? For both Fate and Happiness are inconstant, and therefore these joys are very frail and very perishable. Now every man that possesses these joys either knows that they will depart from him, or he does not know it. If he knows it not, what happiness hath he in his prosperity, being so foolish and unwise as not to know it? But, if he does know it, he dreads to lose his prosperity, knowing full well that he must forfeit it. Continual fear, too, prevents him from being happy. If then anyone care not whether he have it or have it not, why, that must be little or no happiness, when a man can so easily part from it. Methinks I have *before this* proved to thee clearly enough, by many tokens, that human souls are immortal and everlasting, and it is plain enough that no man need doubt but that death is the end of all men, and of their riches also. Therefore I marvel why men are so unreasonable as to think this present life can make a man happy while he lives, when it cannot make

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him miserable hereafter. Indeed, we know of many and many a man that hath sought eternal happiness not merely by seeking the death of the body, but by desiring many most grievous tortures, so that he might win eternal life; *of such were all the holy martyrs.*'

XII

THEN Philosophy began to chaunt a lay, and sang thus; she added song to her discourse, and these were her words: 'He that would build a house to last must not place it high on the hilltop; *and he that desireth Divine Wisdom cannot find it with pride.* Again, he that would build an enduring habitation should not set it on sandhills. *So also, if thou will build up Wisdom, base it not on covetousness*, for as the crumbling sand drinketh up the rain, *so covetousness swalloweth up the fleeting goods of this earth, being ever athirst for them.* No house may stand for long on a high hill if a very mighty wind assail it; nor again one that is built on crumbling sand, by reason of the heavy rains. *So too the soul of man is undermined and moved from its place when the wind of sore hardship assaileth it, or the rain of excessive anxiety. Whoever would seek eternal happiness* must flee from the perilous beauty of this earth, and build the house of his mind upon the firm rock of humility, *for Christ dwelleth in the Valley of Humility, and in the memory of Wisdom. Therefore it is that*

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the wise man spendeth all his life in joy unchangeable and freedom from care, despising these earthly delights and those that are evil, and putting his hope in the joys to come, that are eternal. For God encompasseth him on every side, living as he doth ever in the joys of the soul, though the wind of adversity blow against him, and the ceaseless care begotten of worldly pleasures.'

XIII

HAVING sung this lay, Philosophy, that is, Reason, took up once more her argument, and spake on this wise: 'Methinks that we may now speak in more searching and darker words, for I perceive that my teaching is in some measure penetrating thy mind, and thou understandest well enough what I say to thee. Consider, therefore, how much of all these worldly possessions and riches is thine own, and which of them when closely considered cannot be replaced? What profit hast thou from the gifts that Fate, as thou sayest, giveth thee, and from wealth, even if they last for ever? Tell me, is it thou that givest value to thy wealth, or is it valuable in its own nature? No matter, I tell thee that it is so by its own nature, not by thine. If so, how art thou in any respect the better for that wherein it is good? Tell me now what thou accountest most precious; is it gold, or what is it? Gold, I doubt not. But though this be at present good and valuable, yet

yet he is more delightful and beloved that bestows it than he that hoards it and takes it from others. Likewise wealth is more popular and delightful when given away than when hoarded and kept. Now, covetousness makes the covetous hateful both to God and to man, while virtue makes its possessor beloved, praised, and respected of God, and of those men who cherish it. Since the same thing cannot be his that giveth it and his to whom it is given, therefore it is better and more precious when given than when withheld. If then all the riches of this world were to fall into the hands of one man, would not all other men be poor? *Surely good report and good esteem are for every man better and more precious than any wealth;* for behold, the report filleth the ears of all who hear it, *yet he who speaketh it suffereth no loss. It revealeth the secrets of his own heart and passeth into the recesses of that of his hearer, and on the journey between them it groweth not less; no man can slay it with the sword, nor bind it with cords, and it never dieth.* But of your riches, though they be ever with you, ye have never sufficient, and, though ye give them to other men, ye cannot any the more satisfy their poverty and their greed. Though thou divide them fine as dust, thou canst not satisfy all men alike with them, and when thou hast divided them thou remainest poor thyself. The riches of this world are paltry things, as no man can have enough of them, nor be enriched by them, without making some other man poor. Tell me, does the beauty of gems attract your eyes to marvel at them?

them? Surely, I know it does. Now this quality of beauty in them is theirs, and not yours. Therefore I am greatly astonished how ye men can think the beautiful substance of such senseless things better than your own good qualities, and how ye can admire gems or any other perishable thing that hath not sense; for on no grounds can they deserve your admiration. Though they are God's creatures, yet they are not to be compared with you, for a thing is either not good compared with you, or at any rate of small excellence. We debase ourselves too much when we love what is subject to us more than we love ourselves, or the Lord who created us and gave us all good things. Now, does it please thee to behold a fair country-side?'

XIV

THEN the Mind answered Philosophy and said, 'Why should I not be pleased to behold a fair country-side? Is it not the fairest part of God's creation? Ofttimes we admire the calm ocean and marvel at the beauty of sun and moon and all the stars.'

Thereupon Philosophy, that is Reason, answered Mind: 'But what hast thou to do with their beauty? Darest thou boast it to be from thee? Nay, not at all. Thou knowest that none of these things is thy handiwork; but, if thou must glory, glory in God. Dost thou take pleasure in fair flowers in the spring, as if thou

thou wert their creator? Couldst thou create any such thing, or maintain it when it is created? Nay, by no means. Make not then any such attempt. Art thou the cause that autumn is so rich in fruits? Do I not know thou art not? Why then art thou aglow with such vain pleasure, why so immoderate in thy delight in things not thine, as if they were truly thine own? Dost thou think Fate can cause those things to belong to thee that their own nature makes alien to thee? Nay, indeed, it is not thy nature to possess them, nor is it their obligation to obey thee. *But heavenly things naturally belong to thee, not earthly ones.* Now these fruits of the earth were created for the subsistence of beasts of the field, and riches were created to delude those men who are like unto the beasts, to wit, the unrighteous and intemperate; to such men riches come oftenest. If therefore thou wouldst know what is due measure and what is needful, I tell thee it is *meat and drink and clothes, and implements wherewith to exercise the powers thou hast, and that are natural to thee, and that may be rightly used.* What profit is there for thee to crave beyond measure the riches of this life, when they can help neither thee nor themselves? Very little of them is enough for our natural wants, even such as we have above mentioned. If thou have more of them, either it worketh thee harm, or it is unpleasant to thee, or noisome or dangerous, whatever thou dost in excess. For example, *if thou eat or drink in excess,* or wear more clothes than thou art in need of, this superfluity brings grief to thee, or loathing, or

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perhaps mischance and danger. If thou deemest that splendid raiment is any honour, then I account the honour his who made it, and not thine; and as God is the maker, it is His skill I praise therein. Or dost thou think the number of thy followers renders thee honourable? No, indeed; for if they be wicked and deceitful, then are they more dangerous and troublesome in thy service than out of it, for bad servants are ever their master's foes. Supposing, however, they are good and loyal and true men, is not this to their advantage rather than thine? How canst thou then claim the advantage that belongs to them, since in boasting of it dost thou not boast of what is theirs, not thine own? It is now clear enough that none of the blessings we have been speaking of, and which thou deemedst thine, really belong to thee. If then the beauty and wealth of this world are not desirable, why dost thou repine after that which thou hast lost, or why regret that which was once thine? If it is beautiful, that is by virtue of its own nature, not of thine; its beauty is its own, not thine. Why dost thou regret a beauty that is not thine? Wilt thou take delight in what concerns thee not, and which thou hast not created nor dost possess? These things are good and desirable, for so they are created, and would be so even if thou never hadst them for thine own. Surely thou dost not believe they are the more precious for being lent to thee for thy use? Nay, it is simply because foolish men marvel at riches and prize them that thou gatherest them together and storest them up in thine

hoard. What profit hast thou then from such happiness as this? Believe me when I tell thee thou hast none; but, seeking to escape poverty, thou dost put by more than is needful for thee. Nevertheless I doubt not that all I am saying in this matter accordeth not with thy wish. Your blessings are not what ye men account them to be, for he that would possess great and varied estate needeth much help to carry it. The old saw is very true that was said by the ancients, that they need much who will have much, and their need is little who are content with enough. Nevertheless men would fain glut their avarice with superfluity, but to this they can never attain. Ye believe, I am sure, that ye have no natural good nor blessing within you, inasmuch as ye seek these in other creatures without. 'Tis a crooked wisdom to think that man, though of a godlike understanding, hath in himself no sufficiency of happiness, but must gather together more of the creatures of no understanding than he needeth or is fitting. The unreasoning beasts of the field desire no other possession, but are satisfied with the content of their own hides, together with their natural food. And lo! ye have something divine in your souls, *even Reason and Memory, and the discerning Will to choose*. He therefore that hath these three hath his Creator's likeness, in so far as any creature may have it. But ye look for the blessings and glory of a higher nature in the lower things that perish, not discerning how grievously ye offend God your Maker, who would that all men were lords of all other creatures. Nay rather, ye make your chiefest

chiefest excellence subject to the most lowly of created things, declaring that by your own free judgement ye rank yourselves below your own chattels, thinking as ye do that your happiness lies in false wealth, and that all your possessions are of more value than yourselves. And so they are as long as ye wish it to be so.

'The nature of men is that they surpass all other creatures only in that they know what they are and whence they came; but they are lower than the beasts in that their will holdeth not with their knowledge. The nature of beasts is to have no knowledge of themselves, but in man it is a blemish not to have self-knowledge. Now thou dost plainly perceive that men err in thinking any man may be held in honour for the wealth that is not his own. If therefore a man be held in honour for wealth, and ennobled for his rich possessions, doth not the honour belong to him that bestoweth it, and is he not more rightly to be praised? None the fairer is that which is adorned from without, howsoever fair the adornment wherein it is dressed, and if it was before foul it is none the fairer thereby. On the contrary, no good thing hurteth a man. Lo, thou knowest I lie not, and also that riches oft harm their owners in many ways, and especially in the puffing up of a man, so that many a time the worst and most unworthy of all cometh to think himself worthy to have all the wealth in the world, if he could only get it. He that hath much wealth dreadeth many foes; if he had nothing, no need would there be for him to fear any one. If thou wert a traveller, and hadst much gold

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on thee, and wert to fall among a company of robbers, why, thou wouldst despair of thy life; whereas, if thou hadst nothing about thee, thou wouldst need to fear naught, but couldst go thy way singing *the old verse that was sung of yore*, that 'the naked wayfarer hath naught to dread.' Being then free from care, and the robbers departed, thou couldst mock at wealth, saying, "Verily a fine and pleasant thing is it to have great riches when he that hath them hath no peace."'

XV

WHEN Philosophy had spoken this speech, she began to sing, and said, 'Ah, how blessed was the former age of the world, when each man was content with what the earth yielded! No splendid mansions were there then; no varied dainties nor drinks; nor did men covet costly apparel, *for as yet these things were not; neither were they seen nor heard of. Men cared not for any wicked pleasure, but followed the path of nature in strict measure. They ate but once in the day*, and that was towards evening. The fruits of trees they ate, and roots; they drank no wine unmixed, nor knew to mingle honey with their drink, nor desired silken raiment of various hues. Always they slept out of doors in the shade of the trees; pure spring water was their drink. No merchant had gazed on strand nor island, *and no man had heard tell of the pirate host,*

nor even of any fighting whatever. Not yet was earth defiled with the blood of the slain, nor had a man been wounded. *Evil men had not been seen as yet; no honour had such then, no love.* Alas, that our age cannot become as that was! In these days the greed of men burneth like the fire *of hell that is in the mountain called* Etna, *in the isle of Sicily. This mountain is ever on fire with brimstone, consuming all the countries round about.* Alas, who was the first covetous man that began to dig in the ground for gold, and for gems, and brought to light precious things up to that time hidden and covered by the earth?'

XVI

WHEN Philosophy had sung this song, she began to speak again; and said, 'What more can I say to thee concerning the honour and power in this world? With this power ye men would fain rise to heaven, if ye could. *That is because ye do not remember nor even understand the nature of the heavenly power and honour, which is your own, seeing ye came from heaven.* Now, if your wealth and your power (*which ye now call honours*) fall into the hands of an utterly bad man, *and most unworthy to have them, as, for instance, this very Theodoric, and long ago the Caesar Nero, and many others like unto them, will he not act as they did, and yet do? They destroy and ravage all the countries*

countries subject to them, or anywhere within their reach, even as fire consumeth the dry heath, or as the burning *brimstone of the mount we call* Etna *that is in the isle of Sicily; or like unto the* flood *that was of old in Noah's days.* I think thou wilt remember that your forefathers, the Roman senators, *in the days of Torcwine* [*Tarquin*], *the haughty king*, were forced by *his* pride to banish the name of king from Rome for the first time, and would have banished in their turn, for their pride, even those chief men that had helped to drive him out, had they been able; *for the rule of those men pleased the Roman senators yet worse than the former rule of the kings.* If then it happens, as it seldom does, that power and honour fall to a good and wise man, what is there that deserves our liking but the virtues and honourable character of the good king himself, and not of his power? For power is never a good thing, save its possessor be good; for when power is beneficent this is due to the man who wields it. *Therefore it is that a man never by his authority attains to virtue and excellence, but by reason of his virtue and excellence he attains to authority and power. No man is better for his power, but for his skill he is good, if he is good, and for his skill he is worthy of power, if he is worthy of it. Study Wisdom then, and, when ye have learned it, contemn it not, for I tell you that by its means ye may without fail attain to power, yea, even though not desiring it. Ye need not take thought for power nor endeavour after it, for if ye are only wise and good it will follow you, even*

though ye seek it not. Tell me now, O Mind, what is the height of thy desire in wealth and power? Is it not this present life and the perishable wealth that we before spoke of? O ye foolish men, do ye know what riches are, and power, and worldly weal? They are your lords and rulers, not ye theirs. Suppose ye saw a mouse, a ruler and lawgiver of mice, exacting tribute of them, how marvellous it would seem to you, and with what laughter would ye be shaken! And yet compared with his mind a man's body is as a mouse's body compared to a man's. Now, if ye think of it, ye may easily believe that man's body is more frail than that of any other living thing. The smallest fly can hurt it, *and gnats with their tiny* stings poison it; *and even little worms torment man within and without*, and sometimes nearly kill him, *yea and even the little flea may kill him.* Such creatures may harm him within and without. Again, one man can injure another only in the body, or at least in those worldly possessions that ye call happiness. But no man can harm the discerning mind, nor make it other than it is; and this is very evident in *the Roman prince called Liberius*, who was put to many tortures for refusing to tell the names of his comrades in the plot to kill the king, who had unjustly oppressed them. When he was led before the cruel king and commanded to say who his accomplices were, he bit off his own tongue and dashed it in the king's face. And so it fell out that that which the king meant as a punishment brought praise and honour to this wise

wise man. What harm can one man do another, and not suffer the same from him; or, if not from the same man, then from another? We have also learnt about the savage tyrant Bosiris *the Egyptian.* It was the custom *of this oppressor to receive every comer with great honour, and treat him as a friend immediately on his coming; but afterwards, before it was time for his departure,* he would have him put to death. *Now it happened that Erculus* [*Hercules*], *son of Jobe* [*Jove*], *came to him, and the king thought to treat him as he had treated many a former visitor, drowning him in the river called Nile.* But Erculus *was the stronger, and* drowned him *instead, very rightly and by God's will,* even as he had drowned others. And Regulus too, *that most famous captain that fought against the Africans; he had won an almost unspeakable victory over them,* and, when the slaughter was over, he had the enemy tied together *and laid out in heaps.* But very soon after it came to pass that he himself was bound in their fetters. Lo, now! what is the good of power, thinkest thou, when it cannot in any wise prevent him that holds it from suffering the same ill that he once did to others? Is not power in this case a thing of naught? Again, dost thou think that if honour and power were wittingly good, and had control over themselves, they would obey the most infamous men as they now often do? Knowest thou not that contraries by their nature and habit may not mix nor have any intercourse? Nature abhors such admixture, which is as impossible as that good

and

and evil should live together. But thou seest clearly that this present authority and worldly prosperity and dominion are not good of their own nature and by their own will, and have no control over their own actions, cleaving as they do to the worst men, and suffering them to be their lords; for it is certain that the most infamous men often attain to power and honours. If then power of its own nature and by its own might were good, it would never countenance evil, but good men. The same may be looked for in all blessings brought by Fate during our life here, both with respect to powers of mind and to possessions, for at times they fall to the basest of men. Surely no man doubts that he is strong that is seen to perform a feat of strength, just as, if he gives evidence of any other quality, we doubt not but that he really has it. [HERE ENDETH THE FIRST BOOK OF BOETHIUS, AND BEGINNETH THE SECOND.] For example, music makes a man a musician, and physic makes him a physician, and logic makes him a logician. Likewise the law of nature prevents good from mixing with evil in a man, and evil with good. Though both be in a man, either is separate from the other, for, nature not allowing contrary things to mingle, the one shuns the other, and strives to be itself alone. Wealth cannot make a miser not covetous, nor sate his boundless greed; nor can power render its owner powerful. *Since, therefore, every creature shuns its opposite, and strives amain to repel it, what two things can be more opposed than good and evil, which we never find conjoined?*

conjoined? Thus, then, thou mayest understand that if the joys of this present life had control over themselves and were good in their own nature they would ever cleave to him who used them for good and not for evil. But when they happen to be good they are so by the goodness of him that uses them for good, and he gets his goodness from God; whereas, if a bad man have them, they are evil by reason of the evil of him that doth evil with them, and through the working of the devil. Of what good is wealth therefore, when it cannot satisfy the boundless greed of the covetous, or power, which cannot make its possessor powerful, his desires binding him with their unbreakable fetters? Though power be given to a bad man, it doth not make him good or excellent if he was not so before, but it revealeth his wickedness if he was wicked before, and sheweth it in a clear light if before it was not manifest. For, though he aforetime desired evil, he knew not how he could fully display it until such time as he should have attained to full power. This comes, O men, from your foolish delight in making a name, and calling that happiness which is no happiness, and that excellent which hath no excellence; for such things declare by their end, when it comes, that they are neither one nor the other. Therefore it must not be thought that wealth and power and honours are true happiness. Briefly, then, we may say that of the worldly joys brought by Fate not one is to be desired, for in them is to be found no natural goodness; and this is clear because they never attach themselves to the

the good, nor make good the evil man they most often flock to.'

After Philosophy had finished this discourse, she began to chaunt again, and said, 'Lo, we have heard what cruelties, what ruin, what adulteries, what sins, and what savage deeds were wrought by *the unrighteous Caesar Nero*. Once he had the whole city of Rome set on fire at the same time *after the fashion of the burning of Troy of old, wishing to see how long and how brightly it would burn, compared with the latter town.* Again, he commanded all the wisest men of Rome to be put to death, nay, even his own mother and brother; *yea, even his own wife he put to the sword*; and for such deeds he was never the sorrier, but was the more merry and rejoiced therefor. Nevertheless, during such deeds of wrong, all the world, from east to west, and from north to south, was subject to him; all was his dominion. Dost thou think the divine power could not have taken his power away from this unrighteous Caesar, and put an end to his madness, if it had so pleased? Yes indeed, I know it could if it had wished. Alas, what a grievous yoke he laid on them that were living on earth in his days, and how often was his sword stained with innocent blood! *Is it not now clear enough that his power was not good of itself, since he to whom it was given was no good man?*'

XVII

WHEN Philosophy had sung this song she was silent for a time. Then the Mind answered, saying, 'O Philosophy, thou knowest that I never greatly delighted in covetousness and the possession of earthly power, nor longed for this authority, *but I desired instruments and materials to carry out the work I was set to do, which was that I should virtuously and fittingly administer the authority committed unto me. Now no man, as thou knowest, can get full play for his natural gifts, nor conduct and administer government, unless he hath fit tools, and the raw material to work upon. By material I mean that which is necessary to the exercise of natural powers; thus a king's raw material and instruments of rule are a well-peopled land, and he must have men of prayer, men of war, and men of work. As thou knowest, without these tools no king may display his special talent. Further, for his materials he must have means of support for the three classes above spoken of, which are his instruments; and these means are land to dwell in, gifts, weapons, meat, ale, clothing, and what else soever the three classes need. Without these means he cannot keep his tools in order, and without these tools he cannot perform any of the tasks entrusted to him.* I have desired material for the exercise of government that my talents and my power might not be forgotten

and

and hidden away, *for every good gift and every power soon groweth old and is no more heard of, if Wisdom be not in them. Without Wisdom no faculty can be fully brought out, for whatsoever is done unwisely can never be accounted as skill. To be brief, I may say that it has ever been my desire to live honourably while I was alive, and after my death to leave to them that should come after me my memory in good works.*'

XVIII

WHEN this was spoken, the Mind was silent; and Philosophy began to discourse again, and spake on this wise: 'O Mind, there is one evil which must be shunned. that very constantly and very grievously deceiveth the minds of men that are choice by nature, but not yet arrived at the highest point of perfect virtue; I mean the desire of false glory and unrighteous power, and fame beyond measure for good works among all people. Many men desire power, wishing to have good report, though they are unworthy of it; yea, even the most infamous desire this. But he that is wise and earnest in his quest of good report soon perceiveth how small a thing it is, how fleeting, how frail, and void of all good. If then thou wilt keenly consider, and look into the compass of the whole earth from east to west, and from north to south, as thou mayest read in the book that is called Astralogium, thou wilt perceive that

compared

compared with heaven all this earth is but as a tiny dot *on a wide board, or as a boss on a shield,* according to the judgement of the learned. Dost thou not remember what thou didst read in the works of Ptolemy, *who in one of his books has set out the measurements of all this earth?* There thou mayest see that mankind and beasts take up not nearly one fourth of that part of the earth that can be travelled through, for *what with heat and what with cold it is not all fit for them to dwell in, and the greater part is taken up by the ocean.* Now subtract from the fourth part all the tract covered by the sea, and all its encroachments in the form of inlets, and the parts taken up by fens, and moors, and all the deserts in any land, and thou wilt perceive that there is left for man to dwell in the merest little plot of ground, as it were. How foolish if ye were therefore to toil and strain all your days to blazon your fame far and wide over such a little plot; since the part of the world in which men dwell is but a point compared to the rest. Is your boast then a liberal, or magnificent, or worthy one, that ye dwell on half the fifth part of the earth, so narrowed is it, what with seas and marshes withal? Why then do ye desire so immoderately to extend your name over this tenth part, for it is no more, what with sea and fen and all? Again, consider this small enclosure that we have been speaking about, whereon dwell such a number and variety of races, all diverse in speech, and habits, and customs, over which ye now so extravagantly desire to spread your name. This ye can never do, for their speech is

divided

divided *into two and seventy tongues, and each tongue is further parted out among many peoples*; and the nations are severed and kept apart by *the sea, and by forests, and mountains, and marshes, and by divers deserts* and impassable regions over which even the merchants do not journey. How can the name of any one ruler reach places where the very name of the city where he liveth, and of the nation where he hath his dwelling, is utterly unheard of? I know not for what folly ye desire to spread your names over all the earth, as ye cannot do, nor come near doing. *Thou hast heard, I suppose, how great was the Romans' dominion in the days of the chieftain* [*consul*] Marcus, *whose second name was* Tullius *and his third Cicero.* Well, in one of his books, he mentions that the fame of Rome had not yet crossed the mountains called Caucasus, *nor had the Scythians, who dwell on the other side of those mountains, ever heard the name of that city or people.* It had come first to the Parthians, and even to them it was still very new. And yet it was a name of dread to many a neighbouring people. Do ye not then understand how narrow must be your fame, which ye toil and strive unduly to spread abroad? How great, thinkest thou, is the fame, and how great the honour, that a single Roman can get in a land that even the name of his city and all the glory of its people have never reached? Though a man without measure and unduly desire to spread his fame over all the earth, he cannot bring it to pass, for the customs of nations are so diverse, and so various are their ways, that one

country

country likes best that which another most mislikes, and even deems worthy of heavy punishment. Hence no man can have equal fame in every land, the likings of nations being so different. Therefore let every man be content to be well esteemed in his own country, for, even if he desire more, he cannot attain to it, since a number of men seldom agree in liking the same thing. This is why the fame of a man remains confined to the country where he hath his dwelling, and likewise because it hath often cruelly happened, through the sloth and neglect and carelessness of unlucky historians, that the character and deeds of the foremost and most ambitious men of their day have been left unwritten. And even if the writers had written of their lives and deeds, as they would have done if good for anything, would not their writings sooner or later have grown too old, and perished out of mind, as certain writers and the men they wrote of have done? And yet ye men think to have eternal honour, if ye can by lifelong effort earn glory after your days! If thou wilt compare the moments of this present fleeting life with those of the life unending, what do they come to? Compare the length of time in which thine eye can wink with ten thousand years, and there is some likeness, though not much, since each hath a term. Now compare ten thousand years, or more if thou wilt, with everlasting and eternal life; here thou findest nothing in common, for ten thousand years, though it seem long, doth come to an end, while of the other there is no end. Thus then the finite and the infinite cannot

be

be measured together. If thou wert to count from the beginning of the world to the end thereof, and set all those years against infinity, there would still be no comparison. So it is also with the fame of great men; it may sometimes last long, and endure many years, yet is it very short when compared with that which never endeth. Nevertheless ye care not to do good for aught else save for the poor praise of the people, and for this shortlived fame we have been speaking of. This ye strive to win, neglecting the powers of your reason, of your understanding, and of your judgement; desiring to have as the reward of your good deeds the good report of unknown men, *a reward which ye should seek from God alone.*

'Thou hast heard, I suppose, of a very wise and very mighty man of old, who fell to questioning and railing at a philosopher. The latter was swollen with self-conceit and used to vaunt his philosophy, not making it known by his intelligence, but by his false and over-weening boasts. The wise man, wishing to prove him, whether he was as clever as he thought himself, began to mock and revile him. The philosopher for a time listened quite patiently to the words of the other, but, hearing his taunts, he lost patience and began to defend himself, though up to this he pretended to be a philosopher. So he asked the wise man whether he thought he was a philosopher or not. "I would call thee one," said the wise man, "if thou wert patient and couldst hold thy peace." *How wearisome was the fame that the philosopher had heretofore sought with falsehood!*

Why,

Why, he broke down instantly at that one answer! What availed the best of those that were before us their eager desire for idle glory and renown after their death, or what avails it now to us that are still alive? More useful were it for every man to desire virtues than false fame, for what can fame do for him after body and soul are sundered? Do we not know that all men die in the flesh, although the soul liveth on? For the soul passeth freely to heaven once she is set free and released from the prison of this body, and she despiseth all these things of earth, and delighteth in being able to enjoy the heavenly things after she is sundered from the earthly. *So the Mind itself will be its own witness of God's will.*'

XIX

WHEN Philosophy had made an end of her discourse she began again to chaunt, and this was what she sang: 'Whosoever wisheth to have idle renown and useless vainglory, let him behold on the four sides of him, and see how spacious is the vault of heaven, and how strait the spread of earth, though to us it seem so broad. Then he may be ashamed of the extent of his own fame, being unable even to spread it over this narrow earth. O ye proud ones, why do ye desire to put your necks under that deadly yoke? or why are ye at such idle pains to spread your fame over so many peoples? Though it should happen that the uttermost nations

were

were to exalt your name, and praise you in many a tongue, and though a man were to wax great from his noble birth, and prosper in all wealth and all splendour, yet Death recketh not for these things. He giveth no heed to high birth, but swalloweth up mighty and lowly alike, and so bringeth both great and small to one level. Where now are the bones of the *famous and wise goldsmith, Weland? I call him wise, for the man of skill can never lose his cunning, and can no more be deprived of it than the sun may be moved from his station. Where are now Weland's bones, or who knoweth now where they are?* Where now is *the famous and the bold Roman chief* [*consul*] *that was called* Brutus, *and by his other name Cassius*, or the wise and steadfast Cato, *that was also a Roman leader, and well known as a sage? Did they not die long ago, and not a man now knoweth where they are?* What is there left of them but a meagre fame, and a name writ with a few letters? And worse still, we know of many famous men, and worthy of remembrance, now dead, of whom but few have any knowledge. Many lie dead and utterly forgotten, so that even fame is not able to make them known. Though ye now hope for and desire long life here in this world, how are ye the better for it? For doth not Death come, though he come late, and doth he not put you out of this world? What availeth you then your vainglory, you at least whom the second death shall seize, and hold fast for ever?'

WHEN

XX

WHEN she had sung this song, Philosophy began to discourse and spake thus: 'Do not think that I am too stubborn in my fight against Fate; I fear her not myself, for often it happens that deceitful Fate can neither help nor harm a man. She deserveth no praise, seeing that she herself declares her own nothingness, and in making known her ways she bewrayeth her source. Yet I think thou dost not yet understand what I am saying to thee, for that which I am about to tell thee is so wonderful, that I can hardly set it forth in words as I would. Know that to every man Adversity is more profitable than Prosperity. For Prosperity is ever false and deludeth men to believe that she is true happiness; but Adversity is the real happiness, though we may not think so; for she is steadfast, and her promises always come true. Prosperity is false, and betrays all her friends, for by her changefulness she shows forth her fickleness, but Adversity betters and teaches all those to whom she joins herself. Again, Prosperity takes captive the minds of all them that enjoy her with her cozening pretence that she is good, while Adversity unbinds and sets free all those who are subject to her, by revealing to them how perishable this present happiness is. Prosperity rusheth along in gusts like the wind, but Adversity is ever sober and wary, braced by the prompting of her own peril. By her flattery False Happiness in the end irresistibly

leadeth them that consort with her away from true happiness, but Adversity as often forcibly leadeth all them that are subject to her to true happiness, even as the fish is taken by the hook. Does this then seem to thee a poor possession and a slight increase of thine happiness, this advantage that grim and awful Adversity bringeth thee, in readily laying bare the minds of thy true friends and also of thy foes, so that thou canst clearly know them apart? But this False Happiness, when she forsakes thee, takes away her followers with her, and leaves thy few trusty friends with thee. What wouldst thou give to be supremely happy and to know that Fate went wholly at thy will? And how much money wouldst give to be able to clearly know friend from foe? Why, I know well thou wouldst give ever so much to be able to distinguish them. Though thou thinkest thyself to have lost things of great price, thou hast bought a thing of more worth, that is, true friends; these thou canst recognize, and their numbers thou knowest. Surely that is the most precious of all possessions.'

XXI

WHEN Philosophy had finished this discourse, she began to chaunt, and in her singing said: '*One Creator there is without any doubt, and He is the ruler of heaven and earth and of all creatures, visible and invisible, even God almighty. Him serve all things that serve, they that know Him and they that know Him not, they that know*

know they are serving Him and they that know it not. He hath established unchanging habits and natures, and likewise natural concord *among all His creatures, even as He hath willed, and for as long as He hath willed; and they shall remain for ever.* The motions of the moving bodies cannot be stayed nor turned aside from their course and their appointed order, *but the Lord hath so caught and led, and managed all His creatures with His bridle, that they can neither cease from motion, nor yet move more swiftly than the length of His rein alloweth them. Almighty God hath so constrained all His creatures with His power, that each of them is in conflict with the other, and yet upholdeth the other, so that they may not break away but are brought round to the old course, and start afresh. Such is their variation* that opposites, while conflicting among themselves, yet preserve unbroken harmony together. *Thus do fire and water behave, the sea and the earth, and many other creatures that are as much at variance as they are; but yet in their variance they can not only be in fellowship, but still more, one cannot exist without the other, and ever one contrary maketh the due measure of the other. So also cunningly and befittingly hath Almighty God established the law of change for all His creatures. Consider springtime and autumn; in spring things grow, in autumn they wither away. Again, take summer and winter; in summer it is warm, in winter cold. So also the sun bringeth bright days, and at night the moon shineth, by the might of the same God.*

He forbiddeth the sea to overstep the threshold of the earth, having fixed their boundaries in such wise that the sea may not broaden her border over the motionless earth. *By the same order the alternation of the flow and ebb is ruled. These ordinances God suffereth to stand as long as He willeth*, but whenever He shall loose the bridle-rein wherewith He hath bridled His creatures (*that is, the law of contraries we have mentioned*), and let them fall asunder, they shall leave their present harmony, and, striving together each according to his own will, abandon their fellowship, and destroy all this world, and themselves be brought to nought. The same God uniteth people in friendship, and assembleth them in marriages of pure affection; He bringeth together friends and comrades so that they loyally observe concord and friendship. Oh, how blessed were mankind if their minds were as straight and as firmly based and ordered as the rest of creation is!'

HERE ENDETH THE SECOND BOOK OF THE CONSOLATIONS OF BOETHIUS, AND HERE BEGINNETH THE THIRD. *Boethius was called by a second name Severinus, and was a Roman leader or consul.*

XXII

WHEN Philosophy had sung this lay, she had so captivated me with the delightfulness of her song, that I was in an admiration, and very eager to hear her with all my heart; and very soon after I called to her and spake thus:

'O Philosophy,

'O Philosophy, that art the highest comfort of all weary souls, how thou hast comforted me with thy acute discourse and thy delightful singing! Thou hast so cheered and convinced me with thy wisdom that I think I can not only bear this misfortune that hath come upon me, but, even if yet graver peril befell me, I should never again say that it was undeserved; for I know that I deserve even greater and heavier sorrows. But I would hear somewhat more concerning the medicine of thy doctrine. For though thou saidst a little while ago that it would seem exceeding bitter to me, as thou didst think, yet I do not now fear it, but am very eager both to hear it and to have it; therefore I beg thee very earnestly to fulfil the promise thou madest to me just now.'

Then said Philosophy, 'I quickly perceived, when thou didst hold thy peace and didst hearken with such pleasure to my teaching, that thou wast ready to grasp it and ponder it with thine inward mind. Therefore I waited till I was certain of what thou didst desire, and how thou wouldst understand it, and I strove very earnestly to make thee apprehend it. But now I will tell thee of what nature is the medicine of my doctrine that thou dost ask me for. It is very bitter in the mouth, and makes the throat smart when thou first dost taste it, but it grows sweet when it is swallowed, and is very soothing in the stomach, and returns a very sweet savour. If thou knewest whither I now mean to take thee, doubtless thou wouldst hasten thither eagerly and wouldst be mightily inflamed with desire for

for it, for I heard thee say before how eager thou wast to hear it.'

M. Whither wilt thou now lead me?

P. I mean to lead thee to True Happiness, whereof thou dost often conjecture and dream; but as yet thou canst not find the right way to it, being yet mazed with the outward show of False Happiness.

M. I pray thee to show me beyond all doubt what True Happiness is.

P. I will gladly do so for love of thee; but I must show thee some analogy by way of example until the matter becomes more familiar to thee, so that, having clearly apprehended the example, thou mayest by the analogy arrive at an understanding of True Happiness, and forsake what is contrary to it, namely False Happiness, and then with thy whole soul strive earnestly to attain to the happiness that endureth for ever.

XXIII

WHEN Philosophy had uttered this discourse she began to chaunt again, and spake thus: 'Whoever would sow fertile land, must first pluck up the thorns, and furze, and fern, and all the weeds that he seeth infesting the field, so that the wheat may grow the better. Consider also another example: everybody thinketh honeycomb the sweeter if he a little before taste something bitter. Again, *calm weather is often the more grateful*, if shortly before there have been violent storms *and the north wind with great*

great rains and snows. And the light of day likewise is more grateful by reason of the dreadful darkness of the night, *than it would be if there were no night. So also is True Happiness far more delightful to possess after the miseries of this present life, and* thou mayest far more easily understand this True Happiness, and attain to it, if thou first pluck up and utterly remove from thy mind False Happiness. *Once thou canst get to know the true one, I know thou wilt desire nought else before it.*'

XXIV

AFTER she had sung this song Philosophy stopped singing and was silent awhile, and after musing deeply in her mind said: 'Every mortal man afflicts himself with many and various cares, and nevertheless all desire to come by diverse paths to one end; that is, they desire by diverse deserts to reach one happiness. *Now this is no other than God,* who is the beginning and end of every good thing, and He is the Highest Happiness.'

'Then,' said Mind, 'this seems to me the Supreme good, that man should neither heed nor care about any other good when he hath that which is the roof of all good things; for it encompasses them all round about, and contains them. It would not be the Supreme Good if there existed any outside it, for it would then be apt to desire some good not in its own possession.'

Then Philosophy answered and said, 'It is quite clear

clear that this is the Highest Happiness, for it is both roof and floor of all good. What can that be but the Highest Happiness, that hath in itself all other kinds of happiness; and from which, itself lacking or needing nothing, they all proceed, and to which they return, *as all water proceeds from and returns to the sea? No brook is too small to seek the sea; afterwards it passeth from the sea into the earth, and so it goeth winding through the earth till it cometh again to the same spring from which it flowed at first, and so again to the sea.* Now this is a similitude of True Happiness, which all mortal men desire to get, though they think to come at it by various ways. For each man hath a natural good in himself, and each mind desires to acquire true good, but is hindered by these fleeting joys because it is more prone thereto. For some men think that the greatest happiness is for a man to be so rich as to need nothing more, and all their life long they yearn after this. Some think that the highest good is to be the most honoured by their fellows, and they strive thereafter with might and main. Others think it lies in sovereign power, and desire either themselves to rule or to attach to themselves the friendship of the powerful. Again, some are persuaded that the best thing is to be famous and widely known, and to have a good name, and they labour thereafter both in peace and in war. Many men account it the greatest good and the greatest happiness to be always merry in this present life, and to satisfy every desire. Some, when they seek wealth, seek it to

get

get more power by it, so that they may with impunity enjoy these worldly pleasures and riches. Many again desire power to enable them to amass enormous wealth, or from a wish to spread abroad their name and fame. Such among others are the frail and corruptible honours that afflict the soul of man with yearning and ambition; he thinks he has acquired some notable good when he has received the flattery of the crowd, but I think he has purchased a very false distinction. Some men desire wives most earnestly, for the begetting of many children, and also for a pleasant life. Now I assert that the most precious of all this world's blessings is True Friendship, which must be accounted not a worldly good, but a heavenly blessing; *for it is not false Fate that produces it, but God, who createa natural friends in kinsmen. For every other thing in this world man desireth either because it will help him to power, or to get some pleasure, save only a true friend; him we love for love's sake and for our trust in him, though we can hope for no other return from him. Nature joins friends together and unites them with a very inseparable love; but by means of these worldly goods and the wealth of this life we oftener make foes than friends. By these and many other reasons all men may be shown that all bodily excellencies are inferior to the qualities of the soul.* For instance, we think a man is strong in proportion to the bulk of his body; and a comely and active body gives satisfaction and cheerfulness to its possessor, aud good health makes him merry. Now in all these

bodily

bodily enjoyments men seek simple happiness as it seems to them, for every man accounts that the best and highest good for him which he loves above all things, and thinks he shall be truly happy when he shall have attained it. And yet I do not deny that happiness and prosperity are the highest blessings of this life of ours, for the reason just given; and when a man is convinced that the possession of a thing will bring him great happiness, then he desires it most. Is not this semblance of false happiness clearly revealed, namely possessions, honours, power, and vain glory, and carnal pleasure? Speaking of carnal pleasure, Epicurus the philosopher, when investigating all the various kinds of happiness we have spoken about, said that pleasure is the highest good, for all the forms of happiness we have spoken of flatter and encourage the mind. *Pleasure, however, alone flatters the body most exclusively.*

'Let us talk yet further on the nature of men and their strivings. Though their minds and natures be obscured, and they be hastening on the downward course to evil, yet they desire the highest good, as far as their knowledge and power go. Even as a drunken man knoweth that he should go to his home and his rest, but cannot find the way thither, so it is with the mind when it is weighed down with the cares of this world, for drugged and led astray therewith it cannot find the direct road to what is good. Nor do men think that they at all err that desire to get hold of so much that they need not strive after more; but they believe they

they can gather together all these blessings, so that not one thereof be lacking, knowing no higher good than to get together into their own power the most valuable things, and thereby satisfy every need. *But God only is without need, not man; God, being self-sufficing, needeth nothing besides what He hath in Himself.* Dost thou then account those foolish who think that thing deserving of most honour which they judge to be most perfect? No, surely not, I think that this is not to be despised. How can that be evil which the mind of every man thinketh good, and striveth after, and desireth to possess? No, it is not evil, but the highest good. Why then is not power to be accounted one of the highest blessings of this life? Is power, the most valuable of all worldly possessions, to be reckoned a feeble and useless thing? Are good report and fame to be accounted nothing? No, no, it is wrong to count these things as naught, for every man thinketh his own object of desire the best. But we know, of course, that no poverty, nor hardship, nor sorrow, nor grief, nor melancholy, can be happiness. Why, then, need we talk about happiness any further? Doth not every man know what it is, and know too that it is the Highest Good? and yet nearly every one seeks the highest happiness in very trifling things, thinking it his, if he hath obtained that which he craveth most at the time. Now these eager cravings are for wealth, honours, authority, worldly splendour, vain glory, and carnal pleasures. All these do men desire, for by their means they hope to attain to a state when they shall be

be lacking in no desire, neither in honour nor power nor fame nor pleasure. And their desires, though so various, are reasonable. *By these examples a man may see clearly that every one desires to compass the highest good wherever he may recognize it and wherever he may know how to seek it aright; but he seeketh it not by the straightest path, for that lieth not in this world.*'

XXV

WHEN Philosophy had spoken this discourse she began once more to sing, and her words were on this wise: 'Now will I with song declare how wondrously the Lord guideth all His creatures with the bridle of His power, with what order He hath established and controlleth all creatures, and how He hath bound them and fastened them in bonds unbreakable, so that each created thing is held fast locked to its kind, even that to which it was created; *yea, everything save man and certain angels—these at times leave their kind.* Lo, the lion, even if he be quite tame and firmly fettered, and very fond moreover and also afraid of his master, yet let him once happen to taste blood, and straightway he forgetteth his recent tameness, and remembereth the wild habits of his fathers. He beginneth to roar, and to break his bonds asunder; first he rendeth his master, then everything whatsoever he may get hold of,

of, whether man or beast. So with wild birds of the forest; they may be thoroughly tamed, yet once they find themselves in the greenwood, they set at naught their teachers, and live after their kind. Though their teachers offer them the food wherewith they tamed them once, they heed it not, if only they may have the woods to enjoy; far pleasanter is it, they think, to hear other birds singing, and the forest's answering echoes. Again, it is in the nature of trees to rear themselves aloft; though thou draw down to earth a branch as far as thou hast power to bend it, even as thou lettest it go it will spring up and hasten to its natural state. The sun too doth so; though he sink after midday lower and lower earthwards, yet again he seeketh his natural course and wendeth by hidden ways towards his rising; then mounteth he high and ever higher, as far as is his nature to soar. And so each creature doth; it hasteneth towards its natural state, and is glad if it may reach this. Not one creature is there that doth not wish to reach the place wherefrom it started, where it findeth rest, and naught to trouble. *Now that rest is in God, nay, it is God. But each creature turneth round on itself, as a wheel doth,* and turneth in such a way as to come back to its starting point, and to be once more that which it before was, as soon as it hath returned to where it was, and to do again what it did before.'

XXVI

WHEN Philosophy had sung this song she began to discourse again and said, 'O ye men of this world, though ye act like the beasts in your folly, yet ye can perceive something, as in a dream, of your original, *that is, of God.* Ye perceive that there is a true beginning and a true end of all happiness, though ye understand it not fully; ye are led by your nature towards understanding, but are drawn away from it by manifold error. Bethink yourselves whether men can come to true happiness by their present joys, since nearly all men regard him as the most blest who has all earthly happiness. Can great possessions or honours or all this wealth of the moment make any man so happy as to need nothing more? Certainly I know they cannot. Then is it not manifest that this present good is not the true good, seeing it cannot give what it promises? For it speciously offers to do what it is unable to fulfil, promising those who incline their ear unto it true happiness, and more often than not disappointing them, for it hath no more happiness to bestow than the others have. Now take thine own case, Boethius: wast thou never sad in the height of thy prosperity, or didst thou never lack aught when possessed of most wealth? or again, was thy life in all respects according to thy desire?'

B. No indeed, I was never so evenly poised in mind, as far as I remember, as to be entirely free from care

care and perplexity, and I never yet liked everything, nor had all I wished, though I concealed the fact.

P. Wast thou not then miserable and unhappy enough, though conceiting thyself wealthy, when thou either hadst what thou didst dislike, or didst lack what thou desiredst?

B. All was with me as thou sayest.

P. Is not then a man miserable, when he hath not that which he fain would have?

B. That is true.

P. If then he is miserable he is not content, desiring what he hath not in order to satisfy himself.

B. All thou sayest is true.

P. Well then, wast thou not also miserable in the midst of thy plenty?

Then I answered and said, 'I know thou speakest truth. I was indeed miserable.'

P. I cannot help thinking then that all the riches of the world are not able to make one single man so rich as to have enough and need no more; and yet this is what wealth promises to all who possess it.

'Nothing,' said I, 'is truer than what thou art saying.'

P. Why, of course thou must admit it? Dost thou not every day see the strong robbing the goods of the weak? What else causes every day such lamentation and such strife, and lawsuits, and sentences, but the fact that each claims the property plundered from him, or else covets that of another?

B. A fair question, and what thou sayest is true.

P.

P. For this cause every man needeth support from without to make himself stronger, that he may preserve his wealth.

B. Who can deny it?

P. If he had no fear of losing any of his possessions, he would have no need of outside help.

B. Thou speakest true.

Then Philosophy *made protest sorrowfully* and said, 'Alas! how contrary to every man's wont and every man's desires is what I shall now say to thee, to wit that their fancied source of riches maketh them poorer and more cowardly! For when a man has a little he feels he needs to court the protection of such as possess somewhat more, and, whether he need it or no, he sets his mind on it. Where then is moderation to be found? who possesses it? when will it appear and utterly banish poverty from the wealthy man, who, the more he has, the more he feels himself bound to court the crowd? Can a rich man never feel hunger, nor thirst, nor cold? I think however thou wilt urge that the rich have the means to amend all that, but, though thou urge this, wealth cannot always do this, though it is sometimes able to do so. For they must be able daily to replace their daily loss, human wants being insatiable, and craving every day somewhat of worldly gear, such as clothing, food, drink, and many other things besides; wherefore no man is so well furnished as to want nothing more. But covetousness knoweth no bounds, and is never content with bare necessity, but ever desireth too much. It passes my understanding

understanding why ye men put your trust in perishable wealth, seeing it cannot free you from poverty; nay, ye thereby only increase it.'

When Philosophy had uttered this discourse she began to chaunt again and singing to say: 'What profiteth it the wealthy miser to amass countless riches and to gather store enough of all precious stones, and though he till his fields with a thousand ploughs, and all this earth be his to govern? For he cannot take with him from this earth anything more than he brought hither.'

XXVII

WHEN Philosophy had sung through this song, she began to discourse again and said: 'Two things can honour and power do, if they fall into the hands of a fool; they can make him respected and revered by other fools. But as soon as he quits his power, or his power forsakes him, he has no respect nor reverence from them. Has power therefore the faculty of rooting up and plucking out vices from the minds of its possessors, and planting in their stead virtues? I know that earthly power doth never sow virtues, but gathereth and harvesteth vices; and, when it hath gathered them in, it maketh a show of them instead of covering them up, for the vices of the great, who know and associate with many men, are beheld of the multitude. Thus, then, we lament over power when lost, and at the same time despise it, seeing

how it cometh to the worst of men, and those we think the most unworthy. Hence the wise Catulus long ago waxed wroth and heaped insult and contumely on the rich Nonius, because he met him seated in a gorgeous carriage; *for it was a strict custom among the Romans at that time that only the worthiest should sit in such carriages. Catulus despised the man seated there, whom he knew to be very ignorant and very dissolute; so without more ado he spat upon him. This Catulus was a Roman leader* [*consul*] *and a man of great understanding, and he would certainly not have done such great despite to the other, had the latter not been rich and powerful.*

'Canst thou conceive what dishonour power brings upon him that receives it, if he be imperfect, every man's vices showing the plainer if he hath authority? Tell me now, I ask thee, Boethius, how it came to pass that thou didst suffer so many evils and such great discomforts when thou hadst power, and why thou didst afterwards abandon it so unwillingly? Why, was it not simply because thou wouldst not in all things fall in with the will of *the unrighteous king Theodoric*, perceiving him to be in all respects unworthy of power, shameless and turbulent, and without any good parts? Wherefore we cannot lightly say that evil men are good, even though possessed of authority. *Nevertheless thou wouldst not have been banished by Theodoric, nor would he have been displeased with thee, if like his foolish favourites thou hadst shown liking for his folly and unrighteousness.* Now, if thou wert to see a very

wise

wise man that had much noble pride, but yet was very poor and very unfortunate, wouldst thou say that he was unworthy of power and honours?

B. No, indeed; if I met such a man I would never say that he was unworthy of power and honours, nay, I should consider him worthy of any honour the world may have.

P. Every virtue hath her own special grace; and this grace, and the honour of it, she bestoweth speedily on him that cherishes her. For example, *Wisdom, which is the loftiest of virtues, hath within herself four other virtues, to wit, prudence, temperance, courage, justice. She maketh her lovers wise and worthy, sober, patient, and just, and filleth him that loveth her with every good gift.* This they that possess authority in this world cannot do, for they can from their wealth bestow not a single virtue upon their lovers, if these already naturally have none. Hence it is very clear that the powerful man hath no special virtue in his possessions; they come to him from without, and he cannot possess aught that is outside him as his own. Just consider whether any man is the more unworthy merely because many men despise him; nay, if any man be the more unworthy, it must be the fool who to wise men appeareth the unworthier the more he hath. It is therefore clear enough that authority and riches cannot make their possessor any the more worthy, but rather make him the less worthy, if he were not already good. So too power and wealth are worse if their possessor be not a good man, and either of them is the

baser when they are together. However, I can easily prove to thee by an example, and thou shalt clearly understand, that this present life is like unto a shadow, wherein no man can attain to true happiness. If a very mighty man were to be banished from his own land, or sent on his lord's errand, and came to a foreign country where he was quite unknown and unknowing, and whose language was entirely strange to him, thinkest thou that his power at home would make him honourable there? I know that it could not. If honours belonged naturally to wealth, or if wealth were really possessed by the wealthy man, they would not forsake him, but would accompany him, in whatever country he happened to be. But as they do not really belong to him they desert him, and because they are not in their nature good they vanish *like a shadow or smoke. Though their false hope and imagination lead fools to believe that power and wealth are the highest good, yet it is quite otherwise. When a man of great wealth happens to be either in a foreign land or among the wise men of his own country, his wealth counts for nothing, for then men perceive that they owe their distinction not to any virtue of their own but to the applause of the silly people. If then they derived any special or natural good from their power, they would keep this good, even though they lost their power, and instead of forsaking them this natural good would ever cleave unto them and make them respected in whatever land they were.*

Now thou mayst understand that wealth and power cannot

cannot make a man esteemed in a foreign land. Thou thinkest perhaps that in their own country they may be always able to do so, but I know that they cannot. *Many years ago throughout the Roman realm the leaders, and* judges, *and treasurers that had the keeping of the money paid yearly to the soldiers, and the wisest counsellors,* had the highest honours; but in these days either there are none such, or, if there be, they are held in no honour. So it is with all things that have in themselves no proper natural good; sometimes they are blameworthy, at others to be praised. What pleasure or profit, thinkest thou, are in wealth and power, that are never content, nor have any good in themselves, nor can give to their possessors any lasting advantage?

XXVIII

WHEN she had spoken thus Philosophy began to chaunt again, and sang thus: 'Though the unrighteous king Nero arrayed himself in all the most splendid raiment, and adorned himself with all manner of gems, was he not hateful and contemptible to every wise man, being full of all vice and foul sin? Yea, he honoured his darlings with great wealth; but what were they the better therefor? What wise man could say he was the more honourable for the honours granted him?'

WHEN

XXIX

WHEN Philosophy had sung this lay, then she began to discourse again, and spake thus: 'Dost thou think that companionship of a king and the wealth and power he bestows on his darlings can make a man really wealthy or powerful?'

Then I answered, saying, 'Why can they not? For what is more pleasant and better in this life than the service and neighbourhood of a king, as well as wealth and power?'

P. Tell me, then, whether thou hast ever heard of these things abiding with any of our predecessors, or dost thou think any man who has them now will be able to retain them for ever? Thou knowest that all books are full of examples taken from the lives of the men that were before our time, and every man now living is aware that many a king has lost his power and riches and become poor again. Well-a-day! A fine thing forsooth is wealth, that can preserve neither itself nor its lord, nor ensure the latter from needing further help, nor both from despiteful usage! Is not kingly power your very highest form of happiness? And yet, if a king lacks aught that he desires, his power is thereby lessened and his poverty made greater, for your blessings are always lacking in some respect or other. Yea, kings may rule over many peoples, yet they do not rule all those that they would wish to rule, but are miserable in their mind because they cannot come by all

all they would have; and a king who is greedy has, I know, more poverty than power. It was for this that a king who in old times unjustly seized the kingdom said, 'Oh, how happy the man over whose head no naked sword hangs by a fine thread, as it has ever been hanging over mine!' How thinkest thou? How do wealth and power please thee, seeing they never exist without dread and misery and sorrow? Lo, thou knowest that every king would be quit of these and yet hold power if he could, but I know he cannot; so that I marvel why they glory in such power. Does then he seem to thee to have great power and much happiness that is ever desiring what he can never compass? Or again, dost thou think him very happy that ever goes forth with a great bodyguard, or again him that stands in dread alike of those that fear him and those that fear him not? Dost thou think him to have much power, who, as many do, fancies he has none unless he have many to do his bidding? What shall we now say more of kings and of their courtiers save this, that every wise man will perceive they are poor and very weak creatures? How can kings deny or conceal their weakness, when they can accomplish no great deed without the help of their servants? Or what more shall we say regarding kings' servants, but that it often happens that they are stripped of all their honours, nay, even of life itself, by their false monarch? Do we not know that *the wicked king* Nero was willing to order his own teacher and foster-father, whose name was Seneca, *a philosopher*, to

be

be put to death? And when this man found that he must die he offered all his possessions for his life, but the king would none of them, nor grant him his life. *Perceiving this he chose to die by being let blood in the arm;* and so it was done. Again, we have heard how Papinianus *was the best-loved of all the favourites of the Caesar* Antonius, and how he had most power of all his people; but the Caesar had him *cast in bonds* and then put to death. *Now all men know that Seneca was held in most honour and most love by Nero, as was Papinianus by Antonius, and they were most powerful both within the court and without; and yet, though void of offence, they were done to death. Both desired their lords to take all they had, and let them live, but could not prevail, for the cruelty of those kings was so harsh that the humility of the men availed them no more than their pride had done before; all was in vain; do what they would, they had to forfeit their lives. For he that doth not take care in time will have no provision when his hour cometh.* How do power or wealth please thee now that thou hast heard that no man can possess them and be free from dread, nor give them up if he so desire? What availed the kings' darlings their multitude of friends, or what avail they any man? For friends come in with riches, and depart again with them, save very few. And the friends that love him for wealth's sake depart when wealth departs, and then become his enemies, except those few who formerly loved him out of love and loyalty. These would have loved him even if he had

had been poor; these also abide with him. What is worse plague and greater hurt to any man than to have in his company and neighbourhood a foe in the likeness of a friend?'

When Philosophy had spoken this speech she began to sing again, and these were her words:

'He who would have full power must first strive to get power over his own mind, and not be unduly subject to his vices, and he must put away from him undue cares, and cease to bewail his misery. Though he rule the earth from east to west, *that is*, from India *to the south-east of the earth, even to the island we call* Thule (*that is to the north-west of this earth, where in summer there is no night, and in winter no day*), yet hath he none the more power if he have no power over his own thoughts, and be not on his guard against those vices we have before spoken of.'

XXX

WHEN Philosophy had sung this stave she began again to make a discourse, and said: 'Very unseemly and very false is the glory of this world; and of this a poet once sang, and in his contempt for this present life said, "O worldly glory, why do foolish men falsely call thee glory, when such thou art not?" For men's great fame and glory and honour are owing more to the belief of the foolish crowd than to their own

own deserving. Now tell me, what can be more perverse than this, and why are not men rather ashamed than glad of such things when they hear men speaking falsely about them? Though a good man be rightly praised, and truly spoken of, yet he must not for all that rejoice too unboundedly in what the people say of him; still, he may be glad that they speak the truth of him. Though he may rejoice in that they spread his fame, yet is it not so widely spread as he supposes, for they cannot spread it far and wide over the whole earth, though they may over certain countries. For though he be praised by some men, yet he will be without praise among others: though in one land famous, he will not be famous in another. Therefore is the applause of the people to be held as nothing, since it comes not to every man by his deserving, nor yet remains with him always. Again, consider first as to high birth: if a man boast thereof, what a vain and unprofitable thing his boast is, *for every one knows that all men are come of one father and one mother*. Or again, as to people's applause and praise: I do not know why we take pleasure in it. Though they be famous whom the people praise, yet are they more famous and more rightly praised that are made honourable by virtues, for no man is by right the more famous and praiseworthy by reason of another's goodness and virtues, if he himself possess them not. Art thou the fairer for another's fair looks? A man is very little the better for having a good father, if he himself have nothing

nothing in him. *Wherefore my teaching is that thou shouldst rejoice in the goodness and high heritage of other men so far as not to take it for thine own, for a man's goodness and high heritage are rather of the mind than of the flesh.* The only good I know in being highly born is that many a man is ashamed to become worse than his elders were, and therefore endeavours with all his might to attain to the gifts and virtues of one among the best of them.'

When Philosophy had finished this speech she began to sing concerning the same matters, and said: 'Lo! all men had the like beginning, coming from one father *and one mother*, and they are still brought forth alike. This is not wonderful, for one *God* is the Father of all creatures; *He made them* and ruleth them all. He giveth the sun his light, and to the moon hers, and ordereth all the stars. He created men on earth, bringing souls and bodies together in His might, and in the beginning created all men of like birth. Why then do ye men pride yourselves above others without cause for your high birth, seeing ye can find no man but is high-born, and all men are of like birth, if ye will but bethink you of their beginning and their Creator, and also the manner of birth of each among you? *Now true high birth is of the mind, not of the flesh, as we have said before*, and every man that is utterly given over to vices forsaketh his Creator, and his origin, and his noble birth, and then loseth rank till he be of low degree.'

XXXI

WHEN Philosophy had sung this lay she began to discourse again, and spake thus: 'What good can we say of fleshly vices? For whosoever will forsake them must suffer great privation and many afflictions; for superfluity ever nourishes vices, and vices have great need of repentance, and there is no repentance without sorrow and privation. Alas, how many sicknesses and sorrows, and what heavy vigils and what great miseries, are his whose desires are evil in this world! *And how many more evils, thinkest thou, will he have after this life as the reward of his misdeeds? Even so a woman in travail bringeth forth a child and suffereth great pains, according as she hath formerly enjoyed great delight.* I cannot therefore understand what joy worldly pleasures bring to those that love them. If now it be said that he is happy that fulfils all his worldly lusts, why may it not also be said that beasts are happy, whose will is enslaved by nothing else but greed and lust? Very pleasant is it for a man to have wife and children, *and yet many children are begotten to their parents' destruction, for many a woman dies in childbirth before she can bear the child;* and moreover we have learned that *long ago there happened a most unwonted and unnatural evil,* to wit that sons *conspired together and plotted against* their father. *Nay, worse still, we have heard in old story how of yore a certain son slew his father;*

I know

I know not in what way, but we know that it was an inhuman deed. Lo, also, every one knows what heavy sorrow falls to a man in the care of his children: indeed, I need not tell thee this, for thou hast found it out for thyself. My master Euripides says, concerning the heavy care that children are, that often it were better for an unhappy father never to have had children at all.'

When Philosophy had finished this discourse she began to chaunt again, and thus spake in her song: 'Lo! *the evil desire of* unlawful lust disturbeth the mind of well-nigh every man that liveth. Even as the bee *must die when she* stingeth *in her anger*, so must every soul *perish after unlawful lust, except a man return to virtue.*'

XXXII

WHEN Philosophy had sung this lay, she began to discourse again, and spake thus: 'Wherefore there is no doubt that this present wealth hinders and hampers those men that be drawn towards true happiness, and is unable to make good its promise, namely, to bring them to the highest good. But in a few words I could tell thee with how many evils these riches are filled. What dost thou then mean by coveting money, when thou canst in no way else compass it save by stealing and plundering or begging it, and when one man cannot add to his store of it without another's store being lessened? Then

Then again thou wouldst be high in repute, but to have that thou must with pitiful and humble mien court him that can help thee thereto. If thou wouldst make thee better and more valued than many, then must thou hold thyself of less account than one. Is it not a part of misery to have to fawn so abjectly on the man who has a gift to bestow? Dost thou crave power? But power without care thou canst not have, *not only by reason of strangers*, but yet more for thine own people and kinsmen. Dost thou yearn for vain glory? But glory free from care thou canst not have, for thou shalt ever have something to thwart thee and put thee out. Wouldst thou enjoy over-much carnal pleasure? But *God's good ministers* will then forsake thee, for thy worthless flesh is thy lord, and not thy servant. How can a man demean himself more pitiably than to make himself the thrall of his poor paltry flesh and not of his reasonable soul? Though thou wert greater than the elephant, or stronger than *the lion* or bull, or swifter than the *beast we call* tiger, *and of all men fairest to behold, yet if thou wouldst earnestly seek after wisdom until thou didst attain a perfect understanding thereof, then mightest thou plainly perceive that all the powers and qualities we have spoken of are not to be compared with one single quality of the soul.* For instance, Wisdom is but a single quality of the soul, and yet we all know that it is better than all the other qualities we have mentioned.

'Behold the broad compass, the stability, and the swiftness of yonder heavens; and then ye will be able

to

to understand that they are nothing whatever *when compared with their Creator and Ruler*. Why th . do ye not grow tired of admiring and praising what is of less account, namely, these earthly riches? *As the heavens are better and loftier and fairer than all they contain, save only man, even so is man's body better and more precious than all his possessions. But how much better and more precious, thinkest thou, is the soul than the body? Every creature is to be honoured in its due degree, and the highest is ever to be honoured most; therefore the divine power should be honoured and admired and esteemed above all other things.* Bodily beauty is very fleeting and very fragile, most like the flowers of the earth. A man might be as beautiful as Prince Alcibiades was; but if another were so keen of sight as to be able to see through him (*Aristotle the philosopher said there was a beast that could see through everything, trees, yea, even stones; this beast we call the lynx*)—if, I say, this man were so sharp-sighted as to be able to see through the other we spoke of, he should think him by no means so fair inside as he seemed without. Thou mayest seem fair to men, but it is not any the truer for that; the dullness of their sight hinders them from perceiving that they see the outside of thee, not the inside. But consider right earnestly, ye men, and reflect discerningly upon the nature of these bodily advantages, and the joys ye now crave so unduly; then may ye get to know clearly that the body's beauty and strength can be taken away by a three days' fever. I am telling thee over again all

I told

I told thee before, because I wished to prove to thee plainly *at the end of this chapter* that all present blessings are unable to fulfil the promise they make to their lovers, I mean their promise of the highest good. They may gather together all blessings of the present, but none the more have they perfect good among their number, nor are they able to make their lovers as rich as these would fain be.'

When Philosophy had spoken this discourse, she began once more to sing, and these were the words of her song: 'Ah me, how grievous and how harmful is the folly that deludeth poor mortals and leadeth them from the right way! *The Way is God.* Do ye seek gold on trees? I know that ye neither seek it nor find it there, as all men know that it no more groweth there than gems grow in vineyards. Do ye set your net on the top of the hill, when ye would catch fish? I know ye do not set it there. Do ye then take your dogs and your nets out to sea, when ye would go hunting? *Ye place them, I ween, high up on the hills, and in the woods.* Truly it is wonderful how eager men know they must seek for white and red gems and precious stones of every kind by sea shore and by river strand; and they also know in what waters and at what river-mouths to look for fish. They know where to seek all this temporary wealth, and they pursue it untiringly. But it is a very lamentable thing that foolish men are so blind of judgment as not to know where true happiness is hid, no, nor even take any pleasure in the seeking of it. They think they can find among these fleeting

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and perishable things true happiness, *which is God.* I know not how to show their folly as clearly and blame it as strongly as I would, for they are more pitiful, more foolish, and more unhappy than I can well say. Wealth and honours are their desire, and when they have these they ignorantly fancy they have true happiness.'

XXXIII

WHEN Philosophy had sung this lay, she began again to discourse, and spake on this wise: 'I have now said enough to thee concerning semblances and shadows of true happiness. But if thou art now able to discern the semblances of true happiness, then I must next show thee true happiness itself.'

Then I answered, saying, 'Now I perceive quite clearly that there is no sufficiency of every good in these worldly riches, no perfect power in any worldly authority. True honour does not exist in this world, nor do the greatest of glories lie in this worldly glory, nor the highest joy in fleshly lusts.'

Then Philosophy made answer and said, 'Dost thou then fully understand why it is so?'

'I may,' I answered, 'understand somewhat of it, but nevertheless I would know it more fully and more plainly from thee.'

'It is sufficiently evident,' answered Philosophy, 'that *God* is single and indivisible, though ignorant men divide

Him into many parts, when they misguidedly seek the highest good in the baser creatures. Dost thou think he that has most power in this world has need of no more?'

Again I answered, saying, 'I do not say he has no need of more, for I know that no man is so wealthy as not to need something to boot.'

'Thou sayest quite rightly,' answered Philosophy; 'a man may have power, but if another has more, then the less strong needs the help of the stronger.'

'It is all,' I said, 'as thou sayest.'

Then said Philosophy, 'Though Power and Self-sufficiency are counted as two things, they are but one.'

M. I think so too.

P. Dost thou think that Power and Self-sufficiency are to be despised, or to be honoured more than other advantages?

M. No man may doubt that Power and Self-sufficiency are to be honoured.

P. Let us then, if it so please thee, increase Power and Self-sufficiency by adding to them Honour, and then reckon the three as one.

M. Let us do this, for it is the truth.

P. Dost thou then deem wanting in honour and fame the union of the three qualities, when they are reckoned as one, or does it on the contrary seem to thee of all things most worthy of honour and fame? If thou knewest any man with power over everything and having every honour to such a degree as to need

none

none further, just bethink thee how honourable and glorious that man would seem to thee. And yet if he had the three qualities, but were not of good repute, he would be wanting honour in some measure.

M. I cannot deny this.

P. Is it not then quite evident that we must add Good Repute to the three, and reckon the four as one?

M. 'Tis the natural thing to do.

P. Dost thou think him at all merry who has all these four? Good Temper is the fifth, and then a man may do what he will, without needing anything more than he has.

M. I cannot conceive, if he were like this and had all these things, whence any sorrow could reach him.

P. Nevertheless we must bear in mind that the five things we spoke of, though kept apart in speech, are all one thing when united; to wit, Power, Self-sufficiency, Fame, Honour, Good Temper. These five, when all united, *are God*; wherefore no mortal man can possess all five in perfection while he is in this world. But when the five qualities (as we have before observed) are all joined together they make but one whole, *and that whole is God*; and He is single and indivisible, though before divided into many parts.

Then I answered and said, 'To all this I agree.'

Then said she, 'Though God be single and indivisible (and He is so), yet human error divides Him with its idle words into many parts. Each man counts that his highest good which he loves most.

Now one loves this, another loves something else; so that what a man most loves is his god. In dividing their god therefore into so many parts, they find neither God Himself nor that part of the Good which they love more. When they make the Godhead into one separate whole they neither have Him altogether nor the part they have taken from Him. So no man finds what he seeks, for he seeks it in the wrong way. Ye seek what ye cannot find, when ye seek all that is Good in one form of Good.'

'That is true,' I said.

Then said she, 'When a man is poor he cares not for any power, but desires wealth and flees from poverty. He labours not to be first in fame, and that which a man does not toil after he does not compass. So all his life he toils after wealth, and lets go many a worldly desire, if he may get and keep wealth, for he craves it above all other things. When he does attain it he does not think he has enough unless he have power to boot, for without power he fancies he cannot keep his wealth. So too he is never content until he has all he desires, for wealth craves power, power honour, and honour glory. When he has his fill of wealth, he thinks he shall have every desire if he but possess power; and for power he gives away all his wealth, unless he can get it with less; and he forsakes every other kind of honour, so he may come to power. It often happens that when he has given all he owned in return for power he has neither the power nor what he gave for it, but is now so poor

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as not even to have the bare necessaries, that is, food and clothing. What he desires therefore is not power, but the necessaries of life.

'We were speaking of the five forms of happiness, Wealth, Power, Honour, Fame, and Desire. We have now discussed Wealth and Power, and we may treat in the same way of the three qualities we have not yet considered, Honour, Fame, and Desire. Respecting these three, and the two we mentioned before, though a man think he may enjoy perfect happiness with any one of them, it is not any the more true. Though men may desire it so, they must have all five.'

Then I answered, saying, 'What are we to do then, since thou sayest we cannot have the Highest Good and Perfect Happiness with any one of these, and we have no hope that any one among us may compass all together?'

P. If any man desire to have all five, he desires the highest happiness; but he may not get them in perfection in this world, for though he were to obtain all five kinds of happiness, yet they, not being eternal, will not be the Highest Good nor the Best Happiness.

M. Now I understand quite clearly that the Best Happiness is not in this world.

P. No man in this present life need seek for True Happiness nor hope to find here a sufficiency of good.

M. Thou sayest truly.

Then said she, 'I think I have said enough to thee concerning False Happiness. I would now have thee turn thy thoughts from False Happiness, and then thou wilt

wilt perceive right soon the True Happiness I promised once to show thee.'

M. Why, even ignorant men understand that there is a Perfect Happiness, though it is not where they expect it to be. A little while ago thou didst promise me to show me it. I believe, however, True and Perfect Happiness is that which is able to give to each of her followers abiding wealth, eternal power, perpetual honour, glory everlasting, and perfect independence. Yea further, I say that is True Happiness which can fully bestow one of these five; for in each one of them all reside. I tell thee this because I would have thee know that this principle is very firmly rooted in my mind, so firmly that no man can lead me away from it.

P. Ah, my disciple, thou art happy indeed to have thus grasped it; but I would that we might further seek to know that thing in which thou art lacking.

M. Why, what is that?

P. Dost thou believe that any of these present blessings can bring thee perfect happiness?

Thereupon I answered, saying, 'I know of nothing in this present life that can bestow such a gift.'

P. These present blessings are the semblances of the Eternal Good, but are not Perfect Good, for they are unable to give true and perfect good to their followers.

M. I fully agree with what thou sayest.

P. Since thou knowest what is False Happiness and what the True, I wish thee to learn how thou mayest attain to True Happiness.

M. Thou didst promise me long ago, didst thou not,

to

to teach it to me; and I would now right gladly hear it.

P. What then must we do to the end that we may reach true happiness? Shall we pray for divine help in less as well as in greater matters, even as our philosopher Plato has said?

M. I think we should pray to the Father of all things; for he that will not pray to Him findeth Him not, nor even taketh the right way to find Him.

Then said she, 'Thou art quite right,' and thereupon she began to sing, and these were her words:

'O Lord, how great and how wonderful Thou art, Thou that didst wonderfully fashion all Thy creatures, visible and invisible, and rulest them wisely. O Thou that hast appointed the seasons in due order from the beginning of the world to the end thereof, so that they fare forth and again return; *Thou that wieldest according to Thy will all things that move, Thou dost Thyself abide ever still and unchanging. For none is mightier than Thou, none like unto Thee, nor did any necessity teach Thee to make that which Thou hast made; but by Thine own will and with Thine own power Thou hast made all things, needing none. Most wonderful is the nature of Thy goodness, for Thou and Thy goodness are one;* not from without *did it come to Thee; it is Thine own. But all the good that we have in this world came to us from without, even from Thee. No enmity hast Thou towards any thing, for none is more capable than Thou, none like unto Thee; all good things Thou didst*

didst plan and bring to pass, of Thy sole contriving. No man set Thee the example, for before Thee none was, either to do aught or to leave undone. But Thou hast made all very good and very fair, and Thou art Thyself the highest good and the fairest. Thou didst make this earth even as Thou didst Thyself plan it, and Thou rulest it as Thou wilt, and Thyself dost deal out all good even as Thou wilt. *All creatures Thou hast made alike, and in some things also not alike. Though Thou hast given one name to all creatures, naming them the World when taken together, yet Thou hast parted the single name among four creatures: One is Earth, the second Water, the third Air, the fourth Fire. To each of them Thou hast appointed its own separate place; each is kept distinct from the other, and yet held in bonds of peace by Thine ordinance, so that none of them should overstep the other's bounds, but cold brooketh heat, and wet suffereth dry. Earth and water have a cold nature; earth is dry and cold; water wet and cold. Air is defined as both cold and wet, and also warm. This is not to be wondered at, for air is created half-way between the dry cold earth and the hot fire. Fire is uppermost above all these worldly creatures. Wonderful is Thy contriving, to have done both things: namely, to have bounded things one over against the other, and likewise to have mingled the dry cold earth beneath the cold wet water, so that the yielding and flowing water hath a floor on the solid earth, being unable to stand alone.*

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The earth holdeth the water and in some degree sucketh it in, and is moistened by what it sucketh, so that it groweth and beareth blossoms and likewise fruits; for, if the water did not moisten it, it would dry up and be scattered by the wind like dust or ashes. No living thing could enjoy the land or the water, nor dwell in either for the cold, if Thou hadst not in some measure mingled them with fire. With marvellous skill Thou hast so ordered that fire doth not burn up water and earth, when mingled with either; nor again do water and earth wholly quench fire. The real home of water is on the earth, likewise in the air, and again above the skies. The real home of fire is above all visible worldly creatures, yet it is mingled with all; no creature, however, can it utterly destroy, for it hath not the leave of the Almighty. Next, the earth is heavier and denser than other creatures, for it is lower than any other save the firmament. The firmament surroundeth it from day to day, though it nowhere toucheth it; at every point it is equally near it, both above and beneath. Each of the substances we have spoken of hath its own place apart, and yet one is mingled with another; for no creature can exist without the other, though not apparent in it. Thus earth, ice, and water are very hard for ignorant men to see or conceive of in fire; nevertheless they are mingled therewith. Fire also subsisteth in stones and in water; it is very hard to perceive, but still it is there. Thou hast bound fire in bonds very hard to loose, so that it cannot come to its own home, that is,

to

to the exceeding great fire above us, lest it forsake the earth. All other creatures will perish from uttermost cold if it utterly depart. Thou hast made fast the earth very wonderfully and firmly, so that it leaneth to no side, nor standeth on any earthly thing; nor doth anything of the earth keep it from falling, nor is it easier for it to fall down than up. Thou plantest also threefold souls in befitting members, *so that there is not less of the soul in the little finger than in the whole body. I said the soul was threefold because philosophers affirm that it hath three natures. One of these natures is to be subject to desire, the second to be subject to passion, and the third that it is rational. Two of these qualities are possessed by beasts in the same way as by men, namely, desire and passion; no creature, save man alone, hath reason, and therefore he hath excelled all earthly creatures in forethought and sense. Reason must control both desire and passion, for it is a special virtue of the soul.* Thou hast fashioned the soul so as to turn upon itself, as the whole firmament doth, *or as a wheel turneth, reflecting on its Creator, on itself, or on these earthly things. When it thinketh on its Creator it is above itself; when it reflecteth on itself it is in itself; and it is beneath itself when it loveth these earthly things and admireth them.* O Lord, Thou gavest to souls a home in heaven, and there givest them honourable gifts, to each according to its deserving; *and Thou makest them to shine exceeding bright, and yet with very various brightness, some more brightly, some less, like*

the

the stars, each according to its merits. Thou, O Lord, bringest together heavenly souls and earthly bodies, and minglest them in this world. As they came hither from Thee, even so also they seek to go hence to Thee. Thou didst fill this earth with divers kinds of beasts, and afterwards didst sow it with divers seeds of trees and plants. Grant unto our minds, O Lord, that they may rise up to Thee through the hardships of this world, and from these troubles come to Thee, and that with the eyes of our minds opened we may behold the noble fountain of all good things, even Thee. Grant us health for our minds' eyes, that we may fasten them upon Thee, and scatter the mist that now hangeth before our minds' sight, and let Thy light lighten our eyes; for Thou art the Brightness of the True Light. Thou art the comfortable resting-place of the righteous, and Thou enablest them to see Thee. Thou art the Beginning and the End of all things. Thou bearest up all things without effort. Thou art the Way, and the Guide, and the Bourne whither the Way leadeth; to Thee all men are hastening.'

XXXIV

WHEN Philosophy had chaunted this song and prayer, she began once more to discourse, and spake on this wise:

'I think it first necessary that I should unfold to thee

thee where the Highest Good is, now that I have explained to thee what it is; which was the perfect, which the imperfect good. But one thing I would first ask thee: Dost thou believe anything in this world is so good that it can bestow perfect happiness? I ask thee this because I do not wish any false image to deceive us in place of True Happiness. No man can deny that there is a certain Good, the highest, like a *great and deep* spring, *whence many brooks and streamlets flow.* Concerning any form of good we say that it is not perfect good, inasmuch as it lacks something; and yet it is not utterly lacking, for everything comes to naught if it has nothing good in it. By this thou mayest perceive that the less forms of good come from the greatest good, not the greatest from the less, *even as a river does not become a spring, but the spring may become a river. And yet the river does in the end return to the spring; and so every form of good comes from God and again returns to Him, and He is the full and perfect Good that lacks no desire.* Thou canst now clearly perceive that this is Good in itself. Canst thou not understand that if nothing were complete, then nothing would be lacking, and, if nothing were lacking, nothing would be complete? For, if anything be full, something else must be not full, and the converse is true, and moreover each thing is most complete in its own native place. Surely thou canst understand that if any of these earthly forms of good be lacking in regard to any desire and advantage a certain form of good must exist,

exist, complete as to every desire, and lacking in no advantage.'

'Thou hast,' I answered, 'with great justice and reason overcome me and taken me captive, so that I cannot gainsay thee nor even imagine but that it is as thou sayest.'

Then spake Philosophy, 'I would now have thee consider earnestly till thou perceive where Perfect Happiness lies. Dost thou not know that all mankind with one mind are agreed that God is the origin of all good things and the Lord of all creation? He is the Highest Good, and no man now doubts it; for nothing better, nor even equally good, is known to men. All reason tells us, and all men acknowledge the same, that God is the Highest Good, thereby betokening that all forms of good exist in Him; for if it were not so, then he would not be true to His name. If anything existed before Him or more perfect than He, it would be better than He, but inasmuch as nothing existed before Him, nor is more perfect, nor more precious, He is the Origin, and Source, and Pinnacle of all forms of good. It is quite evident that perfect good existed before imperfect good. Not to speak longer than we need, what we have to believe is that the Most High God is the most perfect in all good. The same God is, as we have before said, the Highest Good and the Best Happiness, seeing that it is generally known that the best kind of happiness exists in no other being but God.'

'I grant this,' I answered.

Then

Then said she, 'I entreat thee to understand clearly that God is full of every perfection, every goodness, and every form of happiness.'

'I cannot quite understand,' I answered, 'why thou dost repeat what thou hast already said.'

'I repeat it,' she said, 'because I would not have thee believe that God, who is the Father and Beginning of all creatures, hath received from any outward source the high goodness of which He is full. Nor again would I have thee believe that He is not the same as His goodness and happiness; for if thou didst believe that His goodness was come from without, then would the source of it be better than He. But it is very great folly and sin to think thus of God, or to believe that anything existed before Him, or was better than or like unto Him. We must then allow that God is the best of all things. If thou believest that it is with God as with man, in whom the man himself, that is, soul and body, is one thing, and his goodness another; if, I say, thou believest that it is so with God, then must thou needs believe that there is a power greater than His, one that brings together His parts, as He does ours. Now, everything that is distinct from another is different, though they be joined; if then anything be distinct from the Highest Good, it is not the Highest Good. But it is grievous sin to believe concerning God that any good exists save in Him, or when separate from Him, for nothing is better than He, no, nor equally good. Therefore I say with perfect reason that that which is the beginning

beginning of all things is in its own nature the Highest Good.'

M. Thou hast most fairly convinced me.

P. Now, I told thee that the Highest Good and the Highest Happiness were one and the same thing.

M. That is so.

P. Well then, what are we to call this but God?

M. I cannot deny this, for I have already admitted it.

Then she said, 'Canst thou understand the matter any the more clearly if I mention yet another example to thee? Suppose there were two kinds of good that could not exist together, and yet were both good, would it not be quite evident that neither was the other? Perfect good, then, cannot be divided. How can it be full and yet lacking? Therefore we say that Perfect Happiness and God are but one form of Good, and that is the highest; these can never be divided. Are we not then bound to admit that the Highest Good and the Godhead are one?'

'Nothing is truer than this,' I said; 'we can find nothing better than God.'

'But I will wrap thee round,' said she, 'with yet another instance, so that thou mayest not find any way out; even as the wont of philosophers is to be ever seeking to show something new and unfamiliar, that they may therewith awaken the minds of their hearers.

'Did we not prove that happiness and the divine nature were one? He therefore who has happiness has both, and he that has both, is he not supremely blessed? Knowest thou not that we say a man is wise who

who has wisdom, and righteous who has righteousness? And so also we name God that which has the divine nature and happiness, and every happy man is a god. Yet there is only one God; *he is the stem and base of all forms of good; from Him these forms all come, and to Him they return, and He ruleth all. Though He is the beginning and foundation of all good men and all good things, yet the forms of good that issue from Him are many, even as all stars receive their light and brightness from the sun, yet some are more, others less bright. Likewise the moon shines according as the sun illumines her; when she is fully lighted up by him, she shines with all her brightness.*'

Now when I understood this discourse I was dismayed and sore afraid, and I said, 'Truly this is a wonderful and pleasing and rational discourse that thou art now speaking.'

'Nothing,' she said, 'is more pleasing nor more wise than the matter of this discourse, and that which we are going to discuss; and so I think we had better join it on to our former discourse.'

'Why, what is that?' said I.

Then said she, 'Well, thou knowest that I told thee that True Happiness was a good thing, and from True Happiness come and to it return all the other forms of good that we have spoken of. *Even so from the sea the water makes its way into the earth, and there grows fresh; then it comes up at the spring, becomes a brook, then a river, then follows the course of the river until it comes again to the sea.* But I would

now

now ask thee how thou hast understood this discourse. Dost thou believe that the five forms of good we have often before mentioned, namely, Power, Honour, Fame, Independence, and Happy Temper—I wish, I say, to know whether thou believest these forms of good are members of True Happiness, even as there are many members in one man, yet all form one body; or on the other hand, whether thou dost think that each of the five forms of good gives rise to True Happiness, and then the (other) four make up the qualities of True Happiness. *For instance, soul and body make but one man, and the man has many members; yet to these two, namely, the soul and the body, belong all the good points of the man, both of the spirit and of the flesh. Thus bodily excellence lies in a man's being fair, strong, tall, and broad, and there are many other good points besides; yet they are not the body itself, for even if it lose any of these qualities it still remains what it was before. Again, the kinds of excellence belonging to the soul are caution, moderation, patience, righteousness, wisdom, and many like virtues.*

M. I wish tho wouldst speak yet more clearly regarding the other good qualities belonging to True Happiness.

P. Have I not already told thee that happiness is a good thing?

M. Yes, and moreover thou saidst it was the Highest Good.

P. Dost thou still admit that Power, Honour, Fame,

Independence, Good Temper, Blessedness, and the Highest Good, are all one thing, and this is good?

M. How shall I deny this?

P. What dost thou then believe that these things are, members of True Happiness, or True Happiness itself?

M. I see what thou wouldst know; but I would rather have thee speak to me about this matter, than ask me questions.

P. Canst thou not conceive that if the forms of good were members of True Happiness they would be in some measure divided; even as the members of man's body are somewhat divided? But the nature of members is that they form but one body, and yet are not wholly alike.

M. Thou needest not labour the point; thou hast said quite clearly that the forms of good are in no wise separated from True Happiness.

P. Thou hast a right understanding of the matter, inasmuch as thou dost perceive that the forms of good are the same thing as happiness, and happiness is the Highest Good, which is God, and God is ever one and undivided.

M. There is no doubt about it; but now I should like thee to tell me something unfamiliar.

Then she said: 'It is now evident that all the forms of good we spoke of belong to the Highest Good, and men seek a sufficiency of good, believing it to be the Highest Good. They also seek power and all the other advantages we have already mentioned, because they

believe

believe this to be the Highest Good. Thereby thou mayest know that the Highest Good is the roof to all the other kinds of good that men desire and take pleasure in, for no man takes pleasure in anything but what is good, or at least what looks like good. Many a thing they crave that is not perfect good, yet has some likeness to what is good. This is why we say that the Highest Good is the highest roof to all kinds of good, the hinge on which they all turn, and the thing for which all good is wrought by men; it is for this that men take pleasure in all kinds of good that they affect. This thou mayest very plainly perceive by considering that no man takes pleasure in the thing itself which he affects or does, but in that which he gains by its means; for he thinks that, if he compass his desire and carry through that which he has thought of, he has perfect happiness. Dost thou not know that no man rides from a desire to ride, but because by his riding he gains some profit? Some by riding gain better health, some greater activity, while others desire to reach some place that they have in view. Now, surely it is plain enough that men love nothing more dearly than the Highest Good, for every desire or deed of theirs arises from their wish to find therein the Highest Good. But some of them err in thinking they can have perfect good and perfect happiness from these present Kinds of Good; whereas Perfect Happiness and the Highest Good is God Himself, as we have often said.'

'I cannot imagine,' I said, 'how I can deny this.'

Then said she, 'Let us now leave the matter, and trouble no more about it, since thou hast got to know so thoroughly that God is ever the indivisible and perfect Goodness, and that His goodness and His happiness came not to Him from without, but have always been, are now, and ever shall be contained in Himself.'

When Philosophy had uttered this discourse, she began again to chaunt, and these were the words she sang:

'Ah well, ye men, *let each that is free make for goodness and happiness;* and let him that is now held captive by the unprofitable love of this world seek *freedom, so that he may come to happiness.* For this is the one resting-place from all our toils; and this haven alone is ever calm after all the storms and billows of our hardships. It is the only refuge, the sole comfort of poor mortals after the misery of this present life. But golden gems and silver, and jewels of every kind, and all this wealth of the present in no wise give light to the eyes of the mind, nor whet their keenness *to the beholding of True Happiness;* but they blind the eyes of the mind even more than they sharpen them. All things that here please in this life of the present are earthly and therefore fleeting. But the marvellous Brightness that lighteneth all things and ruleth them will not suffer souls to perish, but will give them light. If then any man be able to see with clear mind's eye the brightness *of the heavenly Light,* he will say that the brightness of the sun's shining

is

is as darkness *when measured with the everlasting brightness of God.*'

When Philosophy had chaunted this lay, I said, 'I grant what thou sayest, for thou hast shown its truth with wise argument.'

P. What price wouldst thou pay to be able to understand True Goodness, and what manner of thing it is?

M. I should rejoice with an exceeding great joy, and I would pay a sum beyond counting that I might see it.

P. Well then, I will show it thee; but one thing I charge thee, and that is, not to forget in the showing of it what I have already taught thee.

M. No, indeed, I shall not forget it.

P. Did we not say before that this present life that we here desire is not the Highest Good, being diverse and divided into so many parts that no man may have all without being lacking in some respect? I showed thee at the time that the Highest Good is found where all forms of good are united, *melted as it were into one ingot.* Perfect good exists when all the kinds of good that we formerly spoke of are gathered together into a single kind of good; then there will be no form of good lacking; all the forms of good will form a unity, and this unity shall be eternal. If they were not eternal, they would not be so much to be desired.

M. This has been said; I cannot doubt it.

P. I said before that that was not Perfect Good which was not all combined, for Perfect Good is that which is all combined and indivisible.

M.

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M. I think so too.

P. Dost thou then think that all things that are good in this world are good because they contain in themselves some goodness?

M. What else can I believe? Surely it is so.

P. Yet thou must believe that Oneness and Goodness are the same.

M. This I cannot deny.

P. Canst thou not conceive that everything may go on existing, both in this world and the world to come, as long as it is undivided, but when divided it will not be altogether what it was before?

M. Say that to me more plainly; I cannot quite make out what thou wouldst be at.

P. Knowest thou what man is?

M. I know he is soul and body.

P. Well, thou knowest that it is man so long as soul and body are undivided; and not man, once they are divided. So too the body is body while it has all its limbs; if however it lose any limb, it is no longer quite as it was before. The same holds good of anything; nothing remains what it was, once it begins to suffer loss.

M. Now I understand.

P. Dost thou think there is any creature that of its own will does not wish to exist for ever, but would of its own accord perish?

M. I cannot conceive of any living thing knowing its own likes or dislikes that would care to perish of its own accord; for every creature would like to be healthy

and

and alive, at least of those that I consider to have life; I am not sure about trees and plants, and such creatures as have no soul.

At this *she smiled* and said, 'Thou needest not have any more doubts concerning the one kind of creatures than about the other. Canst thou not see that each plant and each tree will grow best in land that suits it best and is natural and familiar to it, where it feels that it can grow quickest and wither slowest? Some plants and trees have their home on hills, some in fens, some on moors, others among stones, others again in bare sand. Take any tree or plant thou wilt from the place where its home is and its habits of growth, and set it in an unfamiliar spot; it will not grow there at all, but will wither, for the nature of every country is to bring forth plants and trees like itself, and it does so in this case. It nurses them and helps them very carefully so long as their nature allows them to grow. Why, thinkest thou, does every seed creep into the earth and grow into shoots and roots *but because it wants the trunk and the tree-top to stand the firmer and the longer? Canst thou not understand, though thou canst not see it, that all the part of the tree that grows in the course of twelve months* begins at the roots, and, growing upwards to the stem, passes along the core and the bark *to the top, and afterwards along the boughs, until it springs forth in leaves and flowers and shoots?* Canst thou not perceive that every living thing is most tender and delicate inside? Why, thou canst see how a tree is clad and wrapped about with the

the bark against winter and stiff gales, and also against the sun's heat in summer. Who can help wondering at such creatures *of our Creator, and at the Creator too?* And, though we marvel at Him, which of us can duly set forth *our Creator's* will and power, how His creatures grow and wane when the time comes for it, and are once more renewed from their seed, as if they were a new creation? Lo, they live once more, and in a measure seem to live for ever, for every year they are created afresh.

'Dost thou yet perceive that the dumb creatures would like to live for ever, as men do, if they were able? Dost thou yet understand why fire tends upwards, and earth downwards? Why is this, save because *God* made the home of the one on high and of the other below? for every creature tends most to go where its home and its nature chiefly lie, and shuns that which is hostile to it or unfitting or unlike. Lo, stones, being of an inert and stubborn nature, are hard to cleave asunder, and likewise come together with pains, if they have been parted. If therefore thou cleavest a stone it will never be united as it before was, but water and air are of a somewhat more yielding kind; they are very easy to cleave, but are soon joined again. Fire, however, can never be divided. Not long ago I said that no creature would perish by its own desire; but now I am more concerned with nature than desire, for these sometimes are diversely minded. Thou mayest know by many tokens that nature is very mighty. It is a very mighty act of

nature

nature that to our body all its strength comes from the food we eat, *and yet the food passes out through the body. But its savour and its virtue pass into every vein, even as when a man sifts meal the meal passes through each hole, and the bran is sifted out.* So also our spirit journeys very far without our will or control, by reason of its nature, not of its will; this happens when we are asleep. Lo, the beasts and also the other creatures covet what they desire rather by virtue of nature than will. It is unnatural for any being to desire danger or death, yet many a thing is constrained to seek one or the other, for the will is stronger than nature. Sometimes the will is stronger than nature, sometimes nature overcomes the will. Such is the case, for example, with carnal desire; it is natural to every man, and yet is sometimes withheld from its natural action by a man's will. All love of lechery is of nature, not of the will.

'By this thou mayest plainly perceive that the Creator of all things hath bestowed one desire and one common nature upon all His creatures, and that is the desire of living for ever. For each being it is natural to desire to live for ever, in so far as its nature may admit. Thou needest not have the doubt thou hadst before, concerning the creatures that have no soul; all creatures, whether possessing souls or not, desire to exist always.'

'Now I understand,' said I, 'what I was before in doubt about, that is, that every creature is desirous of living for ever. This is very apparent in the begetting of offspring.'

P.

P. Dost thou then perceive that every thing that thinks of existence thinks of being combined, whole, undivided? For if it is divided it is not whole.

M. That is true.

P. That is to say, all things nevertheless have one desire, to wit, the desire of living for ever, and with this single desire they crave the one good thing that lives for ever, *namely God.*

M. It is even as thou sayest.

P. Well then, thou mayest clearly perceive that that which all things and all creatures wish to have is a thoroughly good thing.

M. No man can speak more truly; *for I am sure all things created would flow asunder like water, and would not keep peace nor due order. They would fall apart in great disorder and come to naught, as we long since said in this very book, were there not one God to guide and govern and control them.* But now, *inasmuch as we know that there is one Ruler of all things*, we must needs allow, whether we will or no, that He is the crowning roof to all kinds of good.

At this *she smiled upon me* and said: 'Well, well, my child, truly thou art exceeding happy in thine understanding, and I am very glad of it. Thou hast very nearly come to know what is right, and that very thing which thou didst before profess thyself unable to understand thou wouldst now agree to.'

'What was that which I said I could not understand?' I said.

'Why,

'Why, thou didst say,' she answered, 'that thou knewest not the end of every creature; but learn now that the end of every creature is that which thou hast thyself named, *even God.* To Him all creatures are wending; they have no good to seek beyond this, nor can they find anything higher or outside Him.'

XXXV

WHEN she had spoken this discourse, she began to sing once more in these words:

'Whosoever will search deeply with earnest mind after truth, and would have no man nor thing to hinder him, let him begin to seek within himself that which he before sought outside, and have done with useless troubling, as far as he may; and let him attend to this one matter, and tell his mind that it can find within itself all the good things which it seeketh without. Then will he be able very quickly to perceive the evil and vanity that he had before in his mind, as clearly as thou mayest see the sun. Thou wilt then perceive thine own understanding, that it is far brighter and clearer than the sun. For no grossness nor infirmity of the body hath power utterly to take away righteousness from his mind, so that he shall have no trace thereof, *though bodily sloth and infirmities often vex the mind with a dullness and lead it astray with a mist of delusion, so that it cannot*

cannot shine as brightly as it would. Nevertheless a grain of the seed of truth is ever dwelling in the soul, so long as soul and body are united. This grain must be awakened with questioning and with teaching, if it is to grow. How then can any man question righteously and shrewdly, if he have in himself not a jot of righteousness? None is *so sorely bereft of righteousness* that he can give no right answer, when asked. It is a very true saying that philosopher Plato spake: "Whosoever," said he, "remembereth not righteousness, should turn him to his memory; *then shall he find righteousness hid there amid the sloth of the body and the distractions and afflictions of his mind.*"'

Then said I, 'I admit that was a true saying that Plato spake. Hast thou not now reminded me twice of the same matter? First thou saidst I had forgotten the natural goodness I had within myself, owing to the sloth of the body. The second time thou saidst thou hadst noticed that I was myself of the opinion that I had utterly lost the natural goodness I ought to have within me, owing to my unmeasured sorrow for my lost prosperity.'

P. Hadst thou but called to mind the words I spake to thee *in the first book*, thou wouldst thereby clearly have perceived what it was thou didst profess not to know.

M. What was it that I said I did not know?

P. Thou saidst *in the same book* that thou wast convinced that God ruled this world, but thou didst also

also say thou couldst not understand after what fashion He ruled it.

M. I remember quite well mine own foolishness, and I had already acknowledged it before thou didst speak of it. However, although I in some degree understood the matter at the time, I would hear yet more from thee concerning it.

P. Thou didst not doubt that God governed and ruled all the world?

M. I have till now no doubts of it, nor ever shall have any. I will further tell thee shortly how I first came to know it. I perceived that this world was put together out of many and diverse materials, and very firmly stuck and cemented together. If these materials, being so froward, had not been brought together and set in order, they would never have been made nor yet combined; and if He had not bound them with fetters that cannot be loosed they would all fall asunder. Their places and their courses had not been ordered so wisely, so fittingly, and so regularly in respect of their positions and their seasons, were there not one unchanging God to wield them. Him, as He is the Good One, I call by the name of God, even as all creatures call Him.

Thereupon she said, 'Now that thou hast so clear an understanding, I need not trouble over-much to tell thee more about God, for thou art wellnigh come into the city of True Happiness which long ago thou couldst not reach. But we must nevertheless seek that which we before had in mind.'

M.

M. What is that?

P. Did we not prove that Sufficiency was Happiness, and Happiness was God?

M. It is as thou sayest.

P. God needs no other help save Himself, wherewith to rule His creatures, no more than He needed to make them; for if He needed help in any thing He would not be self-sufficient.

M. It is as thou sayest.

P. By Himself He did create all things, and governeth all things.

M. I cannot gainsay this.

P. We have already shown thee that God is through Himself good.

M. I remember thou didst say so.

P. Through goodness God created all things, for of Himself He ruleth all that we before said was good; and He is alone the steady Ruler, and Steersman, and Rudder, and Helm, for He guideth and governeth all creatures, even as a good steersman does a ship.

M. *Now I confess to thee that I have found a door where before I saw but a little crack, so that I could only just spy a very little gleam of light from out this darkness. Thou didst show me the door, but I was none the abler to come to it, and I groped about it where I saw the little gleam twinkling.* I told thee long since *in this very book* that I knew not what was the beginning of all creatures, and then thou didst tell me it was God. Next I knew not concerning the end, until again thou didst tell me it was also God.

Then

Then I told thee I knew not how He ruled all creation; but thou hast now set it very plain before me, *as if thou hadst plucked open the door I had been seeking.*

Then she made answer unto me, and said: 'I know that I once put thee in mind of this very matter, and now methinks thou art getting to know better and better about the truth. Nevertheless I would further show thee an instance, as plain as that which I mentioned before.'

'What is it?' I said.

Then said she: 'No man can doubt that God reigneth over all creatures by their own consent, and they humbly turn their wills to His will. Thereby it is very evident that God wieldeth everything with the helm and rudder of His goodness, for all creatures naturally of their own will strive to reach God, as we have already often said *in this very book.*'

M. Who can doubt this? for God's power would not be full happiness, if creatures obeyed Him against their will.

P. There is no creature that thinks it must resist its Creator's will, if it would be true to its nature.

M. No creature wishes to resist its Creator's will *save foolish man or the rebellious angels.*

P. How thinkest thou, if any creature deemed itself bound to fight against His will, what would it avail against One so mighty as we have shown Him to be?

M. They cannot do so, even though they wish it.

Hereupon

Hereupon she marvelled, saying: 'There is nothing that is able or willing to gainsay so exalted a God.'

M. Nor do I fancy anything is willing to fight against Him, excepting what we before spoke of.

At this she *smiled and* said, 'Know for a truth that that is the Highest Good which ordereth all things so mightily, and created all, and so fittingly ruleth all, and setteth it all out so easily without any effort.'

M. What thou didst tell me before pleased me well, and this pleases me even better; but I am now ashamed that I did not perceive it before.

P. Truly I know thou hast often heard tell in old fables how that Job (Jove) *son of Saturn was the highest god above all other gods, and was son of the sky, and reigned in heaven; and how there were* Giants, *sons of the earth, who did rule over the earth, and how they were, so to speak, sisters' children, Jove being son of the sky, and they sons of the earth. Now the Giants were wrath that he had sway over them, and sought to burst the heavens beneath him; but he sent thunders and lightnings and winds, and scattered therewith all their handiwork, and themselves he slew. Such were the false stories they made up; they could easily have told true ones, and yet very like the others, if false ones had not seemed sweeter to them. They could have told what foolishness Nefrod (Nimrod) the Giant wrought. Nefrod was son of Chus (Cush), Chus was son of Cham (Ham), Cham son of Noe (Noah). Nefrod bade build a*

tower

tower in the field called Sennar (Shinar), and among the folk called Deira (Dura), hard by the town which men now call Babylonia. This they did for the reason that they wished to know how near it was to heaven, how thick and fast heaven was, and what was above it. But it fell out, as was fitting, that the divine might dashed them down before they could bring it to a head, and cast down the tower and slew many a man among them, and split their speech into two and seventy tongues. Thus it happens to all that strive against the might of God; their honour grows not thereby, and that which they had before is lessened.

But consider now whether thou wilt have us search any further after distinctions now that we have found what we were looking for. I think, however, that if we go on letting our words clash together there will spring up some spark of truth that we have not yet seen.

M. Do as thou wilt.

P. Now, no man doubts that God is so mighty that He can bring to pass what He pleases.

M. No man doubts this that knows aught.

P. Is there any one that thinks there is anything that God cannot do?

M. I know there is not.

P. Dost thou think He is able to do anything evil?

M. I know He is not able.

P. Thou sayest truly, for there is no such thing;

if evil existed, God could do it, and so it does not exist.

M. It seems to me thou art misleading and baffling me, *as a child does*. Thou leadst me hither and thither into a wood so thick that I cannot get out; for always after a while thou takest up again the same matter that thou wast before speaking about, and then thou givest it up before finishing it, and takest hold on a strange matter, so that I know not what thou wouldst be at. Methinks thou art turning round about a wonderful and strange discourse concerning the unity of the Godhead. I remember thou didst tell me a marvellous tale about it, saying that Happiness and the Highest Good were all one. Thou saidst that Happiness was firmly rooted in the Highest Good, and the Highest Good was God Himself, who was abounding in every happiness; and thou didst say that every happy man was a god. Next, thou saidst that God's goodness and His happiness were all one with Himself, even the Most High God, and to this God all creatures that are true to their kind tend and desire to come. Moreover, thou didst say that God governed all His creatures with the rudder of His goodness, and that all creatures of their own will and undriven were subject to Him. Now, lastly, thou hast said that there is no such thing as evil; and all this thou hast proved to be true, most reasonably and without any false imagining.

Then said she, 'Thou hast said that I lead thee astray, but I for my part do not think I mislead thee, but

but have told thee an exceeding long and wondrous and rational tale about the God that we once prayed to; and I mean yet further to unfold to thee concerning the same God a somewhat unfamiliar tale. It is of the nature of Godhead that it can exist unmixed with other things and without the support of other things, as no other thing can exist. No creature can stand by itself, as Parmenides the poet long ago sang, saying, "Almighty God is the ruler of all things, and He alone dwelleth without change, and wieldeth all things that change." Therefore thou needest not wonder exceedingly if we go on searching into that which we have taken in hand, with less or more words, as we can show it forth. Though we have to treat of many and diverse instances and parables, yet our mind cleaves all the while to that which we are searching into. *We use not these instances and these parables from a love of fables, but because we desire therewith to show forth the truth, and would like it to be of profit to our hearers.* By the way, I call to mind a precept of the wise Plato; he said that a man who would make use of parables should not take those that were too foreign to the matter he was speaking of at the moment. But listen patiently to what I am now going to say; though once it seemed to thee unprofitable, perhaps the end will please thee better.'

Here she fell to singing, and said,

Blessed is the man that is able to see the clear wellspring of the Highest Good, and cast off the darkness of his mind. We must tell thee yet another

from the fables of old. Once on a time it came to pass that a harp-player lived *in the country called* Thracia, *which was in the kingdom of the Crecas* (*Greeks*). *The harper was so good, it was quite unheard of. His name was Orfeus, and he had a wife without her equal, named Eurudice. Now men came to say of the harper* that he could play the harp so that the forest swayed, and the rocks quivered for the sweet sound, *and wild beasts would run up and stand still as if they were tame, so still that men or hounds might come near them, and they fled not. The harper's wife died, men say, and her soul was taken to hell. Then the harpman became so sad that he could not live in the midst of other men, but was off to the forest, and sate upon the hills both day and night,* weeping, and playing on his harp so that the woods trembled and the rivers stood still, and hart shunned not lion, nor hare hound, *nor did any beast feel rage or fear towards any other for gladness of the music.* And when it seemed to the harper that nothing in this world brought joy to him *he thought he would seek out the gods of hell and essay to win them over with his harp, and pray them to give him back his wife. When he came thither, the hound of hell, men say, came towards him, whose name was Ceruerus and who had three heads; and he began to welcome him with his tail, and play with him on account of his harp-playing.* There was likewise there a most *dreadful* gateward *whose name was Caron; he had also* three heads, *and was very,*

very

very old. Then the harper fell to beseeching him that he would shield him while he was in that place, and bring him back again unharmed. And he promised him to do so, being overjoyed at the rare music. Then he went on farther until he met the *fell* goddesses *that men of the people call Parcæ, saying that they know no respect for any man,* but punish each according to his deeds; *and they are said to rule each man's fate. And he began to implore their kindness;* and they fell to weeping with him. *Again he went on, and all the dwellers in hell ran to meet him, and fetched him to their king; and all began to speak with him and join in his prayer.* And the ever-moving wheel, that Ixion *king of the Leuitas* (*Lapithae*) *was bound to for his guilt,* stood still *for his harping, and King* Tantalus, *that was in this world greedy beyond measure, and whom that same sin of greed followed there,* had rest, and the vulture, it is said, left off tearing the liver of *King* Ticcius (Tityus), *whom he had thus been punishing. And all the dwellers in hell had rest from their tortures whilst he was harping before the king. Now when he had played a long, long time,* the king of hell's folk cried out, saying, 'Let us give the good man his wife, for he hath won her with his harping.' Then he bade him be sure never to look back once he was on his way thence; *if he looked back, he said, he should forfeit his wife.* But love may hardly, nay, cannot be denied! Alas and well-a-day! Orpheus led his wife along with him, until

until he came to the border of *light and* darkness, and his wife was close behind. *He had but stepp'd into the light* when he looked back towards his wife, and immediately she was lost to him.

These fables teach every man that *would flee from the darkness of hell and come to the light of the True Goodness that he should not look towards his old sins, so as again to commit them as fully as he once did. For whosoever with entire will turneth his mind back to the sins he hath left, and then doeth them and taketh full pleasure in them, and never after thinketh of forsaking them, that man shall lose all his former goodness, unless he repent.*

HERE ENDETH THE THIRD BOOK OF BOETHIUS AND BEGINNETH THE FOURTH.

XXXVI

AFTER that Philosophy had chaunted this lay very pleasantly and skilfully, I had still in my mind a trace of the sadness that I had formerly, and I said, 'O Philosophy, thou that art the messenger and forerunner of the True Light, how wonderful it seems to me, what thou tellest me, for I perceive that all that thou hast said to me was told me by God through thee. I knew this also before in some measure, but this sadness had hampered me, so that I had clean forgotten it. Now the greatest part of my unhappiness comes from wondering why the

the good God should let any evil exist, or if it must exist, and He is willing to allow it, why He doth not right soon punish it. Now, thou mayest thyself understand that this is a wonderful thing; but there is also another thing that seems to me a still greater marvel, and that is, that folly and unrighteousness now rule over all the earth, while wisdom and other virtues besides have no praise nor honour in this world. They lie despised *like dung in a midden*, and evil men in every land are now in honour, and the good suffer manifold punishments. Who can forbear to sigh for this, and marvel at such a spectacle, that such evil should ever arise under the rule of almighty God, now that we know He hath knowledge thereof and desireth all that is good?'

Then said she, 'If it be as thou sayest, then is this a horror more awful than any other, and a ceaseless wonder, just as if in a king's court vessels of gold and silver were despised, and wooden ones held in esteem. It is not at all as thou thinkest; but if thou wilt call to mind all that which we have spoken about, with the help of that God concerning whom we are now speaking, thou mayest come to see that the good are always in power, but the wicked have none; that virtues are never without praise and reward, nor are vices ever unpunished, but the good are ever happy, and the bad unhappy. I can show thee very many examples of this, which may strengthen thee so that thou shalt have no reason for further lamenting. But I am now going to point thee out the way that will lead thee to

the

the heavenly city from which thou camest, as soon as thou perceivest through my teaching what True Happiness is, and where it lies. But first I must fledge thy mind, that it may raise itself up more easily before it shall begin to fly to the heights, so that it may fly free from hurt or care to its home, and leave behind all the confusion that it is now suffering from. Let it sit in my car, let it run forth on my way; I will be its guide.'

After that Philosophy had spoken this discourse, she began to sing, and said, 'I have wings very swift, so that I am able to fly above the high roof of the heavens. But if only I might fledge thy mind with wings, so that thou mightest fly with me, then mightest thou look down upon all these earthly things. If thou couldest fly above the firmament, thou couldest see the clouds beneath thee, and mightest fly above the fire that lieth between the firmament and the air, and journey with the sun between the heavenly bodies, and thence come to the firmament and afterward to that cold star *we call the star of Saturn. It is all of ice, and roameth beyond other stars high above any other heavenly body.* When thou hast journeyed out beyond this, then thou art above the swiftly moving firmament, and leavest behind the highest heaven; and then at last thou mayest have thy share in the True Light. There one King reigneth; He hath authority over all other kings; He wieldeth the bridle and the guiding-rein of all the whirling span of heaven and earth; He is the one Judge, steady and bright; He

driveth

driveth the car of all creation. But if ever thou come to that path and that place that thou hast now forgotten, then wilt thou say, "This is my true home; hence I came, and hence I was begotten; here will I now stand fast; never will I hence depart." Nevertheless I know that if ever it shall happen to thee to desire or to be allowed to visit once more the darkness of this world, then wilt thou see that the unrighteous kings and all the overweening rich ones are very feeble and poor wretches, even those same men whom this poor folk now most sorely dreadeth.'

Then said I, 'Ah, Philosophy, great and wonderful is that which thou dost promise, and I doubt not either that thou canst make it good. Yet I entreat thee not to hold me back longer, but to show me the way; for thou canst see that I am longing for it.'

'Thou must first understand,' said she, 'that the good always have power, and the evil never any, nor any virtue; for not one of them sees that good and evil are always in conflict. If therefore the good always have power, then the wicked never have any, for good and evil are at bitter strife. But I should like further to show thee rather more clearly regarding each of the two, that thou mayest the easier believe what I tell thee, now about one, now about the other. There are two things at which every man's thoughts are aiming, to wit, desire and power; if then any man lack one of the two, he cannot with the other bring aught to an issue. For no man will begin what he does not wish to do, unless he must needs do it; and, even

even if he does wish to do it, he cannot, if he have not the power. By this thou mayst perceive clearly that, if thou seest any man desiring what he has not, 'tis the power he lacks.'

M. That is true; I cannot deny it.

P. Next, if thou seest a man that is able to do what he wishes, thou hast no doubt that the power is his.

M. I have no doubt of it.

P. Every man is master of what is in his power.

M. I grant it.

P. Canst thou still remember what I once told thee, namely, that the minds of all men desire to come to True Happiness, though they earn it in diverse ways?

M. I remember it; it was clearly enough proved.

P. And dost thou remember that I told thee that goodness and happiness were all one, and he that seeks happiness seeks goodness?

M. I hold it quite fast in my memory.

P. All men, both good and wicked, desire to come to goodness, though in different ways.

M. What thou sayest is true.

P. It is clear enough that good men are good because they meet with good.

M. Quite clear.

P. And good men get the good they desire.

M. So I believe.

P. The wicked would not be wicked if they were to meet with the good they desire. They are wicked because they do not compass it, and they fail to get it because they seek it not aright.

M.

M. It is even as thou sayest.

P. Therefore it is beyond doubt that the good have always power, while the wicked have none; for the good seek goodness aright, and the evil seek it wrongly.

M. He that does not believe this to be true has no belief at all in truth.

Then said she, 'How thinkest thou? If two men are hastening to the same place, and have an equally great desire to get there, one of them having the use of his feet so as to be able to walk where he pleases, even as it would be natural for all men to be able, and the other being without the use of his feet and unable to walk, and yet longing to move on, and making shift to creep along the same path,—which of these two men thinkest thou the more able?'

M. There is no likeness; he that walks is mightier than he that creeps, inasmuch as he can go where he wishes more easily than the other; say what else thou wilt, every man knows this.

P. It is just the same with the good and the wicked; each of them by his nature desires to reach the Highest Good. But the good man is able to go where he pleases, for he seeks it by the right way, whereas the wicked man may not go where he desires, for he seeks it amiss. But perhaps thou mayest not think so.

M. Nay, that, and naught else, is what I think concerning thine argument.

P. Very rightly thou dost conceive the matter, and this

this is also a token of thy health; even as it is the wont of leeches when they look upon a sick man, and behold in him any benign symptom, to tell him of it. Methinks therefore that thy nature and thy habits do make a stout stand against folly.

I am now persuaded that thou art ready to take in my teachings; and therefore I would bring together for thee a number of arguments and instances whereby thou mayest the easier grasp what I am about to tell thee. Learn then how feeble the wicked are, in that they cannot reach the place where creatures without sense desire to go, and how much more feeble they would be if they had not a natural bent thereto. Behold with how grievous a bond of folly and misery they are bound! *Lo, children, when they can only just walk, aye, and old men, as long as they have power to walk, strive after some credit and renown, children riding their sticks and playing manifold games wherein they imitate their elders.* Fools also will not take in hand any thing from which they may look for praise or reward; but they do what is worse, running hither and thither all abroad under the roof of all creation; and that which is known to creatures without sense is to fools unknown. Now virtues are better than vices, for every man has to admit, whether he will or no, that he is the mightiest that is able to reach the highest roof of all things created, even God. *There is naught above Him, nor beneath Him, nor round about Him, but all things are within Him and in His power. God must be earnestly loved.*

Didst

Didst thou not say a while ago that he was most able to journey that had the power to walk, to the world's end, if he wished, so that no part of this earth should lie beyond? Even the same thou mayest think concerning God, as we have already said that he is mightiest that can go to Him; for anywhere beyond he cannot go.

From all these reasonings thou mayest understand that the good are always powerful, and the bad are bereft of all might and virtue. Why then, thinkest thou, do they forsake virtues and cleave to vices? Methinks thou wilt say it is from ignorance that they know not how to tell them apart. But what dost thou take to be more sinful than want of reason? Why do they acknowledge that they are ignorant? Why will they not seek after virtues and wisdom? 'Tis sloth, I know, besets them and overcomes them with languor, and 'tis greed that blinds them. We have said that nothing is worse than want of common sense; but what are we to say if men of sense possess vices, and will not seek after wisdom and the virtues? Thou wilt say, I know, that unchastity and intemperance beset them; yet what is weaker than the man who is overborne out of measure by his frail flesh, if he cease not after a time, and wrestle with his vices with all his might? But what wilt thou say if a man chooses not to combat them, but of set purpose forswears all good and does evil, being yet able to reason? I call him weak and altogether a thing of naught; for whosoever forswears the common God of all goodness, without a doubt

a doubt he is naught. But whosoever desires to be virtuous desires to be wise; he then that is virtuous is wise, and he that is wise, the same is good. He that is good is happy; he that is happy is blest, and he that is blest is a god, according as we showed it forth *in this very book*. I now think that foolish men will marvel at what I said a while ago, that wicked men were naught, seeing they are more in number than the others. But even if they were never to believe it, yet it is true nevertheless; the wicked man we can never account pure and single-hearted, any more than we can call or account a dead man a living one. The living man is of even less account than the dead, if he repent not of his sin; but he that liveth an unruly life, and will not be true to his own nature, the same is naught.

Yet I fancy thou wilt say the cases are not alike; that the wicked man is able to do evil though not good, whereas the dead man can do neither; but I say unto thee that the power of the wicked comes not from any virtue but from sins. If the wicked were ever good, they would do no evil. That a man can do evil is not power, but weakness; and if that be true which we proved before, that there is no evil, then he that works evil does naught.

M. What thou sayest is indeed true.

P. Have we not shown that nothing is mightier than the Highest Good?

M. It is even as thou sayest.

P. Nevertheless it can do no evil.

M.

M. True.

P. Does any one think that a man is strong enough to do all he pleases?

M. No man in his senses thinks this.

P. Well, but wicked men can do evil.

M. Alas! would that they could not!

P. It is evident that they can do evil, but not good, for the reason that there is no evil; but good men, if they have full power, are able to turn to good everything they please. Now, full power is to be reckoned the highest form of good, for not only power, but also the other kinds of good, and the virtues we long since named, are firmly fixed in the Highest Good. *Even as the wall of every house is firmly set both on the floor and in the roof, so is every kind of good firmly seated in God, for He is both roof and floor of every form of good.* Power is ever to be desired to the end that good may be done; for the best kind of power is for a man to have the ability and the will to do good, with less or more speed, as he may chance to have. For whosoever desireth to do good, the same desireth to possess goodness and with goodness to dwell. Therefore was Plato's saying true enough, when he said that only the wise can turn *to good* what they please, but the wicked cannot even begin to do what they would. *Yet perhaps thou wilt say the good at times begin what they cannot bring to an issue; but I say they always accomplish it. Though they may not be able to bring to pass the deed, yet they have the full purpose; and the unwavering purpose is to be accounted*

accounted an act performed, for it never fails of its reward, here or in the next world. Though the wicked work their will, yet it availeth not; and their purpose is not lost to them, for they are punished for it here or elsewhere; such power hath their wicked will over them. They cannot compass the good they desire, for they seek it with the will, *not by the right way.* The wicked will hath no fellowship with happiness.

XXXVII

AFTER Philosophy had uttered this discourse, she began again to sing, and these were her words:

'*Hear now a tale of overproud and unrighteous kings.* These we see seated on high seats; they are bright with many kinds of raiment, and are girt about with a great company of their thanes, *who are decked with belts and golden-hilted swords and war dress of many kinds*, threatening all mankind with their grandeur. *And he that ruleth them recketh no more of friend or foe than doth a mad hound, but is unspeakably uplifted in mind by reason of his boundless power.* But if thou strip off his clothes, and take away from him his company of thanes and his power, then shalt thou see *that he is most like one of the thanes that minister unto him, if he be not even baser. And if it befall him that for a time he is reft of his servants, and his apparel, and his power, then it seemeth to him that*

that he is brought to a dungeon or put in chains. For out of unmeet and inordinate apparelling, out of dainty meats and diverse drinks, the raging frenzy of lewd desire awakeneth and confoundeth men's minds grievously. Then spring up also pride and frowardness; and, when they are swollen up, the mind is lashed with the surge of hot passion, until a man is bound about with gloom of soul, and held prisoner. When this hath come to pass, then the hope *of revenge beginneth its lying tale to him, and his reckless mood promiseth whatsoever his passion craveth. I have already told thee in this very book that all creatures desire by their nature some good; but the unrighteous kings can do no good, for the reason I have just given thee.* No marvel is it, for they put themselves in thraldom to all the sins I have already spoken of to thee. Such a one must obey the doom of those lords to whom he hath given himself over, and, what is worse, he will not even struggle against it. *If he would but make a beginning, and should be unable afterwards to keep up the struggle, then would he bear no blame for it.*'

When Philosophy had sung this lay, she began again to discourse, and spake on this wise: 'Dost thou now see in how great and deep and dark an abyss of sins men of evil desires are sunk, and how the good shine brighter *than the sun?* For the good are never kept out of the rewards of their goodness, nor the wicked out of the punishments they earn. This is not at all unjust; *even as once it was the custom of the Romans,*

and still is among many peoples, for a golden crown to be *hung up* at the end of a race-course; *many men come together and all start level, as many as put their trust in their running. And whosoever first reaches the crown may have it for himself. Each one desires to be first and have it, but it belongs to one only.* So do all mankind in this present life; they run and hasten, longing for the Highest Good, which, however, is not allotted to one single man, but to all men. Therefore it behoves every man to hasten with all his might after the prize; for from no good man shall it ever be withheld. He cannot rightly be called a good man who is deprived of the highest good, for no good quality fails to get good reward. Let the wicked do what they may, the crown of good meed shall be held by the good everlastingly. No evil deed of the wicked can rob the good of their goodness and their beauty; but if these had their goodness outside themselves they could be stripped of it either by him who once gave it them or by some other. A good man shall lose his reward when he shall lose his goodness. Understand therefore that to every man good meed is given by his own goodness—the goodness, that is, which is within him. What wise man will say that any good man is deprived of the highest good, because he is ever striving thereafter? But bear thou ever in mind the great and goodly Reward, for it is to be loved beyond all other rewards, and add it to the afore-mentioned kinds of good that I told thee of *in the third book.* When they are all brought together, then mayest thou conceive that Happiness

Happiness and the Highest Good are one and the same thing, even God. Then shalt thou also be able to perceive that every good man is blessed, and all blessed men are gods, and have eternal meed of their goodness.

'For these reasons no man need doubt that the wicked have likewise eternal meed of their wickedness, to wit, everlasting punishment. Though thou mayest think one or other of them happy here as the world goes, yet he hath ever his evil with him, and also the reward of his evil, so long as he takes pleasure therein. There is no wise man but knows that good and evil are ever at strife together, and diverse in purpose, and even as the good man's goodness is his own good and his own meed, so also is the wicked man's wickedness his own evil, his own reward, and his own punishment. No man doubts that if he have punishment he has evil. Why do the wicked hope to escape their punishment, being full of every wickedness? Not only are they filled therewith, but well-nigh brought to nothingness. Understand therefore by the case of the good how great the punishment the wicked always suffer, and listen to yet another example, while holding fast to that which I have already told thee. We say that everything that forms a single whole exists so long as it is one, and this united state we call good. *For example, a man is a man so long as soul and body hold together; when they are parted he is no longer what he was before. Thou mayest perceive the same thing in the case of the body and its members; if any one of the members be missing, then there is not a perfect man*

as there was before. Furthermore, if any good man depart from goodness he is no longer quite good if he altogether depart therefrom. Hence it comes to pass that the wicked forsake that which they once did, and yet are not what they were before. But when they forsake what is good and become evil, then they become as nothing and have no likeness to anything. We can see that they once were men, but they have lost the best part of their man's nature and kept the worst. They part with what is naturally good, to wit, the attributes of man, and yet keep the likeness of men as long as life lasts.

'But even as men's goodness exalts them above the nature of men so that they are called gods, so also their wickedness drags them down beneath the nature of man so that they are called evil, and of evil we say that no such thing exists. If, therefore, thou meet a man grown so vile as to have turned from good to evil, thou canst not rightly call him a man, but a beast. If thou observe that a man is greedy and a robber, thou shalt not call him man, but wolf; and the fierce and froward thou shalt call hound, not man. The false and crafty thou shalt call fox, not man; him that is beyond measure savage and wrathful and over-passionate, thou shalt name lion, not man. The lazy one that is too slow, thou shalt call ass rather than man; and the over-timid one that is afraid more than he need be, thou mayest call hare rather than man. To the unsteady and frivolous thou mayest say that he is more like to *the wind* or the restless fowls of the air than

than to a steady-going man; and to him whom thou perceivest wallowing in his carnal lusts thou mayest say that he is most like unto *fat* swine *that love always to lie in foul pools, and never care to wash themselves in clean water. When they are now and again made to bathe, they rush back afterwards to their filth and wallow in it.'*

XXXVIII

WHEN Philosophy had spoken this discourse she began to sing again, and these were her words: *'I can from stories of old tell thee one that is very like unto what we are now discussing. Once upon a time, during the Trojan war, there lived, as it happened, a king named Aulixes (Ulysses), who held two countries under the Caesar. These countries were called Ithacige (Ithaca), and Retie (Rhaetia), and the Caesar's name was Agamemnon. When Aulixes went with the Caesar to the war he had several hundred ships, and they were fighting about ten years. And when the king came from the Caesar homewards again and they had conquered the land he had no more than one ship, a three-banked galley.* Then high winds *and stormy seas* beset him, and he was driven upon an island *out in the Wendelsea (Mediterranean). Now a daughter of Apollo, son of Job (Jove), dwelt there. Job was their king, and feigned that he was the highest*

highest god, and the silly folk believed him, for he was of the kingly clan, and in those days they knew no other god, but worshipped their kings for gods. Job's father was also said to be a god; his name was Saturnus, and each of his sons likewise they accounted a god. One of them was the Apollo we just now spoke of. Now Apollo's daughter was, men say, a goddess *whose name was Kirke* (*Circe*). *She was said to be mighty in witchcraft, and dwelt in the island upon which the king we spoke of was driven. There she had a very great company of her thanes, and also of other maidens. No sooner did she look upon the shipwrecked king we have mentioned, whose name was Aulixes, than she fell in love with him, and each loved the other beyond all reason, so that for love of her he gave up all his kingdom and his kindred. And he tarried with her so long that his thanes could no longer stay with him, but, yearning for home and being minded to punish him, resolved to leave him. Now makers of fables started to make up a story,* and said she changed the men with her witchcraft, and turned them into the shapes of wild beasts, *and then cast upon them chains and fetters.* One, they say, she changed into a lion, *and when he should have spoken he roared.* Some were boars, *and when they should have been bemoaning their woes they grunted.* Some became wolves, and howled when they should have spoken. Some became *the kind of beast we call* tiger. Thus was all the crew changed into various kinds of beasts, each into some one or other, save only

the

the king. They shunned every sort of food that men eat, and hungered after such as beasts feed on. They had no likeness to men in body or in voice, yet each had his reason as he had before. Their reason was very sad for the miseries they were suffering.

'*Now the men who believed these false tales knew* that she could not with her witchcraft change men's minds, though she changed their bodies. Verily the power of the mind is great when measured with that of the body! *By such ensamples thou mayest perceive that* the power of the body lieth in the mind, and every man is more harmed by the sins of his mind. The sins of the mind draw unto themselves the whole body, but the infirmity of the body cannot altogether draw in the mind.'

Then said I, 'I grant that what thou saidst is true, namely, that it was not wrong to call men of wicked desires cattle or wild beasts, though they may have the likeness of men. Nevertheless, if I had power such as Almighty God has, I would not let the wicked harm the good as greatly as they now do.'

'They are not,' she said, 'allowed to do so for as long a time as thou thinkest, but thou mayest understand that they are very speedily checked in their impunity, as I will forthwith prove to thee, although I have no time to spare for a fresh topic. If they had not the vain power they believe themselves to have, they would not suffer so great a penalty as they have to suffer. The wicked are ever more unhappy when they are able to carry out the evil they take delight in, than

than they are when they cannot do it, though foolish men may not believe it. 'Tis bad that a man should wish to do evil, but it is far worse that he should be able to do it; *for the evil will scatters like smoke before a fire if the deed cannot be accomplished.* The wicked have at one time and another three sorts of unhappiness: the first is that they desire evil, the second is that they are capable of it, and the third that they bring it to pass; *for God hath elected to bestow punishment and misery on wicked men for their deeds of evil.*'

'It is even as thou sayest,' I said, 'nevertheless I could wish, if possible, that they had not the unlucky power to do evil.'

'I fancy, however,' said she, 'they lose the power sooner than thou couldst wish or than they themselves expect, for nothing in this present life is lasting, though men may think it long. Very often the mighty power of the wicked fails exceeding suddenly, *even as a great tree in the forest falls with a loud crash when least expected*; and it is from dread of this that they are always very miserable. If, therefore, it is their wickedness that makes them miserable, is not the evil that lasts long worse than that which is short-lived? Even if the wicked never died I should say that they were the most miserable and unhappy of men. If all those miseries are real which we long ago said the wicked had to undergo in the world here, it is clear that these miseries are endless or eternal.'

'What thou sayest,' I said, 'is wonderful and very hard

hard for witless men to grasp; nevertheless I perceive that it is quite in keeping with our earlier discourse.'

'I am not now speaking,' said she, 'to witless men, but to such as desire to get hold of wisdom; for it is a sign of wisdom when a man desires to hear it and lay hold of it. But if any foolish man doubt concerning any of the arguments we have used in this very book, then let him prove, if he be able, one thing or the other, either that one of the arguments is false or is not akin to the matter we are discussing, or, thirdly, let him understand and believe that we are on the right track. If he do none of these things, then he knows not his own mind.

'But I can show thee yet other things that foolish men will think even harder to believe, though it is quite in keeping with the argument we are carrying on.'

'Why, what is that?' I said.

P. It is this, that the wicked, who suffer great misery and manifold punishment in this world for their sins, are far more unhappy than those who suffer no vengeance nor punishment in this world for their wickedness. Let no man, however, think I speak thus merely because I desire to blame vices and praise virtues, and to hold up this example as a warning to men and to draw them to virtue by the fear of punishment; it is for other reasons that I speak, and speak even more strongly.

M. For what other reasons wouldst thou speak, over and above those that thou hast mentioned?

P. Dost thou remember what we were saying, that the

the good always had power and happiness, and the evil never had either?

M. I do remember it.

P. What thinkest thou then? If thou seest a man very unhappy, and yet discernest some good in him, is he as unhappy as the man who has no whit of good in him?

M. Him I count the happier that has some good.

P. But what thinkest thou concerning him that hath no good, if he has some evil to boot? Why, thou wilt say he is even more unhappy than the other, by reason of the added evil.

M. Am I not bound to think so?

P. It is well that thou dost; and mark this with thy inmost mind, that the wicked have ever something good in the midst of their evil. This is their punishment, and this may well be accounted unto them for good. But they whose wickedness goes all unpunished in this world are held by sin more grievous and more harmful than any punishment in this world. That their wickedness goes unpunished in this life is the clearest sign of the greatest sin in this world, and an earnest of the direst penalty hereafter.

M. This I cannot deny.

P. The wicked are unhappier for being forgiven their sin when they deserve it not, than they whose sin is rewarded according to their deserts. For it is right that the wicked should be punished, and wrong that they be left unpunished.

M. Who gainsays this?

P.

P. And no man can deny that what is right is altogether good, and what is wrong is wholly bad.

M. I am sore perplexed by this manner of speaking, and I wonder that so righteous a Judge should be willing to give any gift that is not just.

P. What makes thee say that?

M. Because thou saidst He did wrong in suffering the wicked to go unpunished.

P. 'Tis His glory that He is so generous and giveth so freely; 'tis much that He granteth in biding until the wicked perceive their sin and turn towards good.

M. Now I understand that it is not an everlasting grace that He granteth to the wicked, but a manner of delay and waiting for the Highest Judge. Methinks that for His delay and His patience He is the more unheeded; nevertheless I much like this manner of discourse, and it seems to go very well with what thou hast already said. But I entreat thee yet further to tell me whether thou thinkest the wicked have any punishment after this world, or the good any reward for their goodness.

Then she said, 'Have I not already told thee that the good have reward of their goodness, both here and for ever, and the wicked reward of their evil, both here and in eternity? But I will now divide the wicked into two classes, for one part of them has everlasting punishment, having earned no mercy, and the other part *shall be cleansed and refined in the heavenly fire, as silver is here.* These, having deserved some measure of mercy, are allowed, after their troubles, to come

come to eternal glory. Still further could I discourse to thee concerning the good and the wicked, if I had but time. But I dread lest I should lose sight of what we were seeking after, that is, our desire to convince thee that the wicked had honour neither in this world nor in the world to come. For thou wast of opinion that they had too much thereof, and didst think that a most fearful thing, and didst lament continually that they were under continual punishment; and I kept telling thee they were never free from punishment, though thou didst not think so. But nevertheless I know thou wilt lament that they have leave to work wickedness during so long a space of time. I told thee that this space is a very short one, and moreover I tell thee that the longer it is the more unhappy they are, and their greatest unhappiness would be for it to last until doomsday. Further, I told thee that they whose wickedness was unjustly pardoned were unhappier than they whose wickedness was justly punished. Yet thou art to believe that they who are unchecked are more unhappy than they who have met with punishment.'

'Nothing,' said I, 'ever seems to me so true as do thy words at the moment when I am listening to them. But if I turn to the opinion of the common folk, not only do they refuse to believe thy story, but even to listen to it.'

'No marvel,' she answered. '*Surely thou knowest that those men who have not sound eyes cannot gaze with ease full upon the sun when he is shining brightest*

brightest, nor even on fire or on aught that is bright do they care to look, if the eyeball be diseased. Even so sinful minds are blinded with their wicked desire, so that they are unable to behold the light of the Bright Truth, that is to say, the Highest Wisdom. They are like fowls of the air and beasts that can see better by night than by day; for the day blinds and darkens their eyes, and the darkness of night lightens them. Therefore these purblind minds account it the greatest happiness that a man be allowed to work evil, and his deed to go unpunished; *and for this reason they care not to follow up an inquiry until they discern what is right, but turn them to their unrighteous desires and go in quest thereof. I know not therefore what it avails for thee to show me unto foolish men, that never go in search of me. Not to these do I ever speak, but to thee, for thou art minded to track me out, and toilest harder than they do on the trail. I care not what they think; I set greater store on thine opinion than on theirs*, for they are all gazing *with both eyes*, of the mind and of the body, on these things of the earth, *and have their joy therein.* But thou alone at times glancest with one eye at the things of heaven, whilst with the other thou art still looking at the things of earth. *Fools think that everybody is as blind as themselves, and that none can see what they themselves cannot. This folly is* as if *a child were born quite healthy and well formed, and remained thriving in every excellence and virtue while still a child, and so throughout its youth, until he became perfect in every faculty,*

faculty, and then not long before middle age became blind of both eyes, and likewise so blinded in the eyes of his mind as to remember nothing of what he had ever seen or heard, and yet should deem himself in every respect as perfect as he ever had been, *regarding all men as like unto himself, and of the same way of thinking.* He may be foolish enough to believe this, but are we going to think as he does? I do not think so; but I should like to know what thou thinkest of those men whom we spoke of and held to be more like beasts than men. How much wisdom is theirs? Methinks they have none.

'I would prove to thee yet another very true proposition, but I know the common folk will not believe it, namely, that they that are punished are happier than they that punish them.'

At this I marvelled, and said, 'I wish thou wouldst make it plain to me how such can be the case.'

P. Dost thou perceive that every man that desires evil and does it is worthy of punishment?

M. I perceive it quite clearly.

P. Is not he then a wisher and a worker of evil that punishes the innocent?

M. It is as thou sayest.

P. Dost thou think they that are worthy of punishment are miserable and unhappy?

M. I do not only think so; I know it full well.

P. If thou hadst to decide, which wouldst thou deem the more worthy of punishment, him that punished the innocent, or him that suffered the penalty?

M.

M. The cases are not alike. I would help him that was without guilt, and chastise the man that had harmed him.

P. Then he that works evil seems to thee more wretched than he that suffers it?

M. My belief is that every unjust punishment is a wrong in him that inflicts it, not in him that suffers it, for the wickedness of the first makes him wretched. I perceive that is a very just proposition thou layest down, and quite in keeping with what thou didst prove before; but yet I know the common folk do not think so.

'Thou hast a right understanding of the matter,' she answered, 'but pleaders at times defend them that have less need of them; they speak in behalf of those who are wronged, not of those that do the wrong. It were more needful for them that harm the innocent that some one should speak for them before those in authority, and demand that punishment should be inflicted upon them as great as the wrong they did to the innocent. Even as the sick man needs to be brought to the physician, to be tended by him, so he that works mischief needs to be taken before the magistrate that his vices may be cut out and burnt. I do not say it is wrong to help the innocent and plead his cause; but I say that it is better to bring the guilty man to judgement, and that the pleading does no good either to the wrong-doer or to him that pleads for him, if they desire that the wrong should not be punished according to the measure of the

of the guilt. I am sure that if the guilty had but a spark of wisdom, and if they at all understood that they might atone for their sins by the punishment that befell them in this world, they would not call it punishment, but would say it was their cleansing and bettering. They would then seek no advocate, but would gladly suffer those in authority to illtreat them at their pleasure. We should not scourge a man that is sick and in pain, but should take him to the physician to be tended.'

XXXIX

AFTER Philosophy had spoken this discourse, she began once more to chaunt, and these were her words:

'Why do ye men distract your minds with unrighteous hatred, even as the waves driven by the wind stir up the sea? Why do ye blame your fate for having no power? Why can ye not await Death in nature's course, since he is day by day hastening towards you? Can ye not see that every day he pursueth birds and beasts and men? Alas, that unhappy men cannot wait for him to come to them, but go to meet him, even as wild beasts that seek to slay each other. But it is not right for men to hate one another; it were right that each should reward the other for every deed according to his deserving, loving the good man, as it is right we should do, and showing mercy to the wicked, as we said before. *Let us love the man, but hate*

hate his sins, and cut them away as we are best able.'

When she had done singing this song, she was silent a little while.

Then said I, 'Now I see plainly that true happiness hinges on the merits of good men, and unhappiness on the deserts of the wicked. But I further say that I hold the joys of this present life to be no small blessing, and its sorrows no small evil, for I never yet saw nor heard of a wise man desiring to be outcast, poor, a stranger, and despised, rather than wealthy, honoured, powerful and famous in his own country. Accordingly, wise men say they can the more easily carry out and maintain their wisdom if their power be absolute over the people subject to them, and also in some measure over them that dwell near and round about them, saying that they are thus able to bring low the wicked and further the good. For the good man is ever worthy of honour, both in this present life and in the life to come; but the wicked man that cannot be held back from his wickedness is ever deserving of punishment, both in this world and in the next. But I marvel exceedingly why things fall out as they now often do, namely, that various punishments and manifold hardships come to the good, as they should do to the bad, and the blessings that should be the rewards of the good for their good deeds come to wicked men. Therefore I would now learn from thee what thou thinkest of these ups and downs. I should marvel far less if I knew that it happened by chance, without

God's will and without His knowledge. But Almighty God hath increased mine awe and mine astonishment by these things, for at one time He giveth blessings to the good and unhappiness to the wicked, as it is right He should always do; at another time He suffereth the good to have unhappiness and ill luck in many things, and the wicked to have blessings and success after their own heart. Therefore I cannot conceive save that it happens thus by chance, unless thou explain it still more reasonably in another way.'

Then after a long while she made answer, and said, 'No marvel is it that one should think everything of this kind happens without design, when he cannot make out and show why God allows it. But thou art not to doubt that so good a Creator and Ruler of all things hath fashioned aright all that He hath created, and judgeth and governeth all with justice, though thou know not why He doth it in this or in that way.'

After having uttered this discourse she began to sing, and these were her words:

'*Which of the unlearned wondereth not at the course of the heavenly sphere and its swiftness, how every day it turneth round about all this earth? Or who marvelleth not that some stars have a shorter journey round than others, as those stars have that we call the Wain Shafts?* These *have so short a journey round because* they are so near to the *northern* end of the axle round which all this vault of heaven is turning. *Or who marvelleth not at this, save only those*

those who know the reason why, that some stars have a longer journey round than others have, and they have the longest that circle round the middle of the axle, even as Boeties (Boötes) doth, *and Saturn, the star which comes not back to where it once was till thirty winters be passed?* Who wondereth not that some stars journey under the sea? *This some men think the sun doth, when he goeth to his setting, but he is no nearer the sea then than he was at midday.* Who wondereth not when the full moon is overcast with darkness, or again, that the stars shine before the moon, but give no light before the sun? At this they marvel, and at much of the same kind, *yet do not marvel that men and all living things have a ceaseless and vain enmity among themselves. Or why do they not marvel that sometimes there is thunder, and at other times it is not heard?* Or again, why do they not wonder at the strife of sea and winds, of waves and land, or why ice formeth and afterwards in the sun's glare returneth to its own kind? The fickle folk marvel at what they see most seldom, though it be less a wonder, *and think it is not of ancient creation, but hath newly arisen by chance. But they that become eager for knowledge and set themselves to learn, if God pluck away from their minds the folly with which they were covered before*, cease to wonder at many things whereat they now are marvelling.'

When Philosophy had chaunted this lay, she was silent a little.

Then said I, 'It is even as thou sayest; but

I would have thee show me somewhat more plainly concerning the thing that has troubled my mind most, concerning which I have already asked thee; for it has ever been thy wont to be willing to point out to every mind things secret and little known.'

At this she began to smile, and said unto me, 'Thou art tempting me to the greatest of themes, and the hardest to explain. *This explanation all philosophers have sought after and toiled at very earnestly, and scarcely any of them has come to a conclusion of the matter*; for it is the nature of the discussion and inquiry that no sooner is one doubt settled than countless others are stirred up. It is like the serpent *told of in the old story, that had nine* heads, *and, when one of them was struck off, seven more always grew where the one head had been. And it came to pass that the famous Erculus* (*Hercules*), *son of Job* (*Jove*), *came to it, and could not bethink himself how to overcome it by any wile, until he heaped firewood round it, and burnt it with fire.* So it is with this subject thou art asking me about; a man can hardly get quit of it once he enters upon it; and he never reaches a clear conclusion, save he have an understanding keen as fire. For the man that would inquire into it must first know what the onefold providence of God is, and what Fate is, what happens by chance, and what are divine intelligence, divine predestination, and human freewill. Now, thou canst perceive how heavy and how difficult it is to explain all this; but nevertheless I will set to work

to

to teach thee somewhat, for I have noted that it is a powerful remedy for thy sorrow if thou understandest aught of this, though it be a long task for me to teach thee. *For it is nigh unto the time when I had purposed to take other work in hand, and as yet I have not done with this; methinks also thou art a little tired and deemest these long arguments too wearisome*, as though thou wouldst now be glad of some singing. I know thou desirest it, but thou must bear up for a time; *I cannot now put it so soon into song*, nor have I leisure for it, for it is a very long story.'

'Do as thou wilt,' I answered.

Then she began to speak in a very remote and roundabout fashion, as though she were not alluding to the subject, and yet she led up to it, saying, 'All creatures, both the seen and the unseen, the motionless and the moving, receive from the unmoving, unchanging, and undivided God their due order, form, and proportions; and, inasmuch as it was so created, He knoweth why He made all that He hath made. Nothing of what He hath made is without use to Him. God ever dwelleth in the high city of His unity and mercy; thence He dealeth out ordinances many and various to all His creatures, and thence He ruleth them all. But regarding that which we call God's providence and foresight, this exists as long as it abides with Him in His mind, ere it be brought to pass, and while it is but thought. But as soon as it is accomplished we call it Fate. From this every man may know that Providence

Providence and Fate are not only two names, but two things. Providence is the Divine Reason, and lieth fast in the *high* Creator that knoweth how everything shall befall ere it come to pass. But that which we call Fate is God's working day by day, both that which we see, and that which is not seen of us. The divine forethought holdeth up all creatures, so that they may not fall asunder from their due order. Fate therefore allots to all things their forms, places, seasons, and proportions; but Fate comes from the mind and the forethought of Almighty God, who worketh whatsoever He will according to His unspeakable Providence.

'Even as every craftsman thinks over and marks out his work in his mind ere he take it in hand, and then carries it out altogether, so this changing lot that we call Fate proceeds according to His forethought and purpose, even as He resolveth that it shall be done. Though it seem to us manifold, partly good, partly evil, yet it is to Him good, pure and simple, for He bringeth it all to a goodly conclusion, and doeth for good all that He doeth. When it is done, we call it Fate; before, it was God's forethought and His purpose. Now Fate He setteth in motion by means of the good angels or the souls of men, or the lives of other creatures, or through the heavenly bodies, or the divers wiles of evil spirits; at one time through one of them, at another through all. But it is manifest that the divine purpose is single and unchanging, and rules everything in orderly wise, and gives unto all things their shape. Now some things in this world

are

are subject to Fate, others are in no way subject; but Fate, and the things that are subject to her, are subject to divine Providence. Concerning this I can tell thee a parable, so that thou mayest the more clearly understand who are the men that are subject to Fate, and who are they that are not.

'All this moving and changing creation turns round the unmoving, the unchanging, and the undivided God, and He ruleth all creatures as He purposed in the beginning, and still doth purpose. The wheels of a waggon turn upon its axle, *while the axle stands still and yet bears all the waggon and guides all its movement. The wheel turns round, and the nave next the wheel moves more firmly and securely than the felly does. Now the axle is as it were the highest good we call God, and the best men move next unto God just as the nave moves nearest the axle. The middle sort of men are like the spokes, for one end of each spoke is fast in the nave, and the other is in the felly; and so it is with the midmost man, at one time thinking in his mind upon this earthly life, at another upon the divine life, as if he looked with one eye heavenwards, and with the other earthwards. Just as the spokes have one end sticking in the felly and the other in the nave, while in the middle the spoke is equally near either, so the midmost men are at the middle of the spoke, the better sort nearer the nave, and the baser nearer the fellies, joined, however, to the nave, which in turn is fixed to the axle. Now, the fellies are fastened to the spokes, though they roll on the*

the ground; and so the least worthy men are in touch with the middle sort, and these with the best, and the best with God. Though the worst men turn their love towards this world they cannot abide therein, nor come to anything, if they be in no degree fastened to God, no more than the wheel's fellies can be in motion unless they be fastened to the spokes, and the spokes to the axle. The fellies are farthest from the axle, and therefore move least steadily. The nave moves nearest the axle, therefore is its motion the most sure. So do the best men; the nearer to God they set their love, and the more they despise earthly things, the less care is theirs, and the less they reck how Fate veers, or what she brings. *So also the nave is ever sound, let the fellies strike on what they may; and nevertheless the nave is in some degree severed from the axle. Thereby thou mayest perceive that the waggon keeps far longer whole the less its distance from the axle, and so also those men are most free from care, both in this present life of tribulation and in the life to come, that are firmly fixed in God. But the farther they are sundered from God, the more sorely are they confounded and afflicted both in mind and in body.*

'That which we call Fate is, compared to divine Providence, what reflexion and reason are when measured against perfect knowledge, and as things temporal compared with things eternal, or, again, like the wheel compared with the axle, the axle governing all the waggon. So with the forethought of God; it governeth the firmament and the stars, and maketh the earth

earth to be at rest, and measureth out the *four* elements, *to wit, water, earth, fire, and air.* These it keepeth in peace; unto these it giveth form, and again taketh it away, changing them to other forms and renewing them again. It engendereth everything that groweth, and hideth and preserveth it when old and withered, and again bringeth it out and reneweth it when it pleaseth. *Some sages, however, say that Fate rules both weal and woe of every man. But I say, as do all Christian men, that it is the divine purpose that rules them, not Fate; and I know that it judges all things very rightly, though unthinking men may not think so. They hold that all are good that work their will, and no wonder, for they are blinded by the darkness of their sins.* But divine Providence understandeth it all most rightly, though we in our folly think it goes awry, being unable to discern what is right. He, however, judgeth all aright, though at times it seems to us otherwise.

'All men, both good and bad, are seeking after the Highest Good; but the wicked cannot come to the roof-tree of all things good because they seek not rightly thereafter. Perhaps thou wilt now say to me, "What wrong can be greater than to allow it to happen, as it does at times happen, that unmixed evil befalls the good in this world, and good unalloyed comes to the wicked, while at other times the lots of both good and wicked are intermingled?" But I ask thee whether thou thinkest anybody is so shrewd as to be able to discern the nature of every man, so that he be neither

better

better nor worse than the other judges him to be? Why, I know this cannot be, for often a habit is wrongly judged, of which some men say it is worthy of reward, and others that it is worthy of punishment. Though one may perceive what another does, he cannot know what he thinks; though he may be able to learn part of his will, he cannot learn it all. I can readily show thee an example whereby thou mayest understand it more clearly, though undiscerning men cannot understand it. Why does a good physician give to one healthy man a mild and sweet drink, and to another a bitter and strong one; and again, in the case of sick men, to one mild drink and to another strong, to one sweet and to another bitter? I know everybody that is ignorant of the craft will marvel why they do so; but the physicians do not marvel at all, for they know that which the others know not, namely, how to discern and know apart their diseases, and likewise the means wherewith to combat them. Now what is the soul's health but righteousness? What is its disease but wicked ways? Who, therefore, is a better physician of the soul than He that created it, even God? He showeth honour to the good, and punisheth the wicked. He knoweth what reward each deserves, and it is no wonder, for He beholdeth it all from the roof on high, and thence He mixeth and measureth out to each according to his deeds.

'This, then, we call Fate, when the discerning God that knoweth every man's need worketh or suffereth aught that we do not look for. I can in a few words give

give thee yet another example whereby man's reason may apprehend the divine nature, that is to say, the case where we judge a man in one way and God judges him in another. Sometimes we think he is better, but God knows he is not so. When aught of good or evil befalls a man in greater measure than thou thinkest he deserves, it is not God's unrighteousness but thy dullness not to be able to discern it aright. Yet it oft comes to pass that men judge a man in the same way as God judgeth him. Often it happens that many men are so infirm, both in mind and body, that they are not able to do any good, nor desire, if they can help it, to do evil, and are also so restive that they can bear no suffering with patience. Therefore it often happens that God in His loving-kindness will not lay too grievous an affliction upon them, lest they forsake their harmlessness and grow worse if checked and afflicted. Some are fully possessed of every virtue, right holy and just men, and such God thinketh it wrong to afflict; yea, even death, which all men have by their nature to suffer, He maketh more gentle to them than to other men. *The wise man of old said that the divine power sheltered its loved ones under the spread of its wings, and shielded them as carefully as a man shields the apple of his eye. Many strive to please God, desiring of their own will to suffer many hardships, for they seek to have greater honour and repute and credit with God than those whose lives are softer.* Power in this world also often comes to very good men, to the end that the might of the wicked be destroyed.

destroyed. To some men God giveth both good and evil mingled, for they deserve of either; some He bereaveth very soon of their wealth in which they are most happy, lest for over-long happiness they exalt them beyond measure and pass thence to pride. Others He suffereth to be oppressed with sore affliction, that they may learn the virtue of patience during their long hardship. Some men dread tribulation more than they need, though they are able to bear it with ease; others buy honourable reputation in this present life by their own death, thinking they have nothing to buy fame with save their own lives. Some men have been in days gone by unconquerable, so that none could subdue them with any torture; and these were an example to their successors not to be mastered by it. In them it was manifest that by reason of their good deeds they had the virtue of being unconquerable. But the wicked for their evil deeds were punished and subdued, that their chastisement, while deterring others from doing the like, might lead to repentance those whom it was afflicting at the time. This is a very clear token to the wise man that he is not to love worldly happiness beyond measure, for often it comes to the worst of men. *But what are we to say of the present well-being that often comes to the good man? What else is it but a token of the weal to come, and a beginning of the reward that God hath in store for him in return for his good will?* I think also that God gives happiness to many wicked men because He knoweth their nature and their will to be such that they

are

are none the better but only the worse for any affliction. But *the good physician*, even God, healeth their minds with riches, wishing them to understand *whence the well-being comes to them*, and to court Him lest He part them and their wealth, and to turn their ways unto good and forswear their sins and the wickedness they once did in their adversity. Some, however, are the worse if they have wealth, *for they are overweening for it and revel in it out of measure.*

'Many men also are given worldly wealth that they may reward the good for their goodness and the wicked for their wickedness. For the good and the wicked are ever at odds, and sometimes also the wicked fall out among themselves. Yea, even a single wicked man is always in conflict with himself, for he knows that he does wrong, and knows what reward to look for, but will not cease from it nor even allow himself to repent thereof, and then, being in constant dread, cannot be at peace with himself. Often also it happens that the wicked man gives up his wrong-doing out of wrath at another man's misdeed, wishing to rebuke the other by shunning his ways. Then he strives with all his might, endeavouring to be unlike the other, for 'tis the wont of the divine power to work good out of evil. But no man is allowed to know all that God hath purposed, nor yet to explain what He hath made. It suffices him therein to know that the Creator and Ruler governeth all things, and rightly fashioned all that He hath created, and hath wrought no evil nor yet worketh it, but driveth away every wrong from

His

His kingdom. But if thou wilt inquire into the high power of Almighty God, then thou wilt perceive evil in nothing, though now there seems to thee much evil here on this earth. Therefore it is right that the good should have an excellent reward of their goodness, and that the wicked should have punishment for their wrong-doing. That which is right is not evil, but good. But I perceive that I have wearied thee with this long discourse, for now thou wouldst fain hear a song. Well then, hear one, for 'tis the medicine and the drink thou hast long been craving, so that thou mayest the more readily receive my teaching.'

After Philosophy had uttered this discourse she began once more to sing, and her words were on this wise:

'If thou desire with clear mind to apprehend the high Power, behold the luminaries of the high heavens. These bodies keep up the ancient peace wherein they were created, so that the fiery sun toucheth not that part of the heavens where the moon journeyeth, nor doth the moon touch the part where the sun runneth, as long as he is there. *The star we call* Ursa never cometh into the west, though all other stars journey with the heavenly sphere after the sun round the earth. *This is no marvel, for it is very nigh unto the upper end of the axle. But the star we call* the evening star, when *seen in the west*, betokeneth eventide. *Then it passeth with the sun into the earth's shadow until it overtaketh the sun from behind and riseth in front of him. Then we call it* the morning star, *for*

it

it riseth in the east, and bodeth the sun's coming. *The sun and the moon have parted between them day and night in even degree, and reign most peacefully through the divine foresight, and will serve Almighty God unweariedly till the day of doom. God suffereth them not to be both in one quarter of the heavens, lest they destroy other creatures.* But the peace-loving God ordereth all things and atoneth them that are in conflict. Now wet shunneth dry; now He mingleth fire with cold; the light and bright fire flieth upwards, and the heavy earth abideth beneath. *By the King's command* earth bringeth forth *every fruit and growing thing* year by year, and the hot summer drieth and *getteth ready* seeds and fruits, and fruitful autumn bringeth them to ripeness. Hail and snows and oft-falling rain wet the earth in winter, *and the earth receiveth the seed and maketh it to grow in the spring. But the Lord of all things* feedeth in the earth all growing crops and bringeth them all forth, hiding them *when it pleaseth Him, making them to appear when He will, and taking them away when He will. While creatures are ministering unto Him*, the Highest Creator sitteth upon His high seat, whence He wieldeth all things with His guiding reins. 'Tis no marvel, for He is King, and Master, and Wellspring, and Beginning, and Law, and Wisdom, and Righteous Judge. He sendeth all creatures on His errands, and biddeth them all return. If the one unchanging King had not stablished all things created, they would all have fallen and burst asunder and come to naught.

Nevertheless

Nevertheless they have one thing in common—their single love in the serving of such a Master; and they rejoice that He ruleth them. No wonder is it, for they could not be at all, did they not serve their Maker.'

XL

THEN Philosophy ceased from her singing and said unto me: 'Dost thou now perceive whither this discourse is tending?'

'Tell me,' I answered, 'whither.'

P. I will say this to thee, that every fate is good, whether men think it good or bad.

M. Methinks it may easily be so, though we may at times deem otherwise.

P. There is no doubt that every fate is good that is just and profitable; for every lot, be it pleasant or unpleasant, cometh to the good man either to constrain him to do better than he did before, or to reward him for having done well before. Again, every lot that befalls the wicked man comes to him also for these two reasons, whether his lot be a harsh or a pleasant one. If a hard lot befalls the wicked, then it comes as a reward of his wickedness, or as a rebuke and warning to him not to do it again.

At this I fell to wondering, and said: 'This is a most truly just reasoning of thine.'

P. It is as thou sayest; but I desire, if it please thee, that we should turn for a while to the opinion of

of the common folk, lest they say we speak above man's measure.

M. Say as thou wilt.

P. Dost thou think that what is useful is good?

M. I think it is.

P. Every lot is useful that instructs or punishes.

M. That is true.

P. An adverse lot is good for those that are fighting against sins and striving to be good.

M. I cannot gainsay this.

P. What thinkest thou of the good fortune that often befalls good men in this world, like a foretoken of everlasting good? Can men say it is an evil fate?

At this I smiled and said, 'No man says so, but says it is very good, as indeed it is.'

P. What thinkest thou concerning the unlooked-for fate that often threatens to chastise the wicked? Do people think it is good fortune?

M. No, they do not deem it good, but miserable.

P. Let us refrain from thinking as the common folk think; for if we think as they do we shall forsake all reason and all righteousness.

M. Why do we forsake it any the more?

P. Because ordinary men say that every harsh and unlovely lot is evil; but we must not believe this, for every lot is good, as we said before, be it harsh, or be it pleasing.

At this I was afraid, and said: 'What thou sayest

is true; yet I know not who would dare to say so to foolish men, for no fool could believe it.'

Hereupon Philosophy made earnest protest, and said: 'No wise man therefore should take thought nor trouble himself over-much as to how his lot will turn out, or whether a hard or a gentle fate is to befall him, any more than a stout man-at-arms should trouble himself how often he is to fight. His praise is none the less, nay, is doubtless the greater; so also is the wise man's meed the greater, the fiercer and crueller the fate that befalls him. No wise man therefore should desire a life of ease, if he cares aught for virtue or any honour in this world here, or for life everlasting after this world. But every wise man must ever resist both harsh and mild fortune, lest for the one he wax over-confident and for the other come to despair. He must rather follow the middle way between a hard fate and a mild one, so that he crave not a gladder lot and greater ease than is meet; nor again a harsh one, for of neither is he able to endure an excessive measure. But which of the two they shall choose lies in their own power. If therefore they desire to take the middle path, they must allot themselves a pleasant and care-free fortune, and then God will deal out to them a lot of hardship both in this world and in the world to come, according to what they are able to bear.

'Ah! ye wise men; walk, all of you, in the way pointed out by the famous examples of the noble ones and the ambitious men that lived before you! *Why will ye not inquire after the wise men and those that coveted*

coveted honours, what manner of men they were that came before you? And why will ye not, when ye have found out their manner of life, copy them with might and main? For they strove after honour in this world and set themselves to win good report with good works, and wrought a goodly ensample for those that came after. Therefore *by virtue of their good deeds* they now are dwelling above the stars *in bliss everlasting.*'

HERE ENDETH THE FOURTH BOOK OF BOETHIUS, AND BEGINNETH THE FIFTH.

After Philosophy had held this discourse, I said: 'Very true is thy teaching; but I would remind thee of the manifold doctrine thou didst promise me concerning the foreordained purpose of God. But I would first know from thee whether there is anything in what we often hear men say about certain things, that they happen by chance.'

P. I would rather hasten on to make good my earlier promise to thee, and point out to thee the very shortest way I can find to thy native land. But it is indeed far from our way, from the way we have chosen to follow. It were therefore more profitable to turn to that concerning which thou hast asked me, and to get to understand it. But I dread to lead thee hither and thither into bypaths away from thy road, so that thou mayest not be able to find the way again.

M. Thou needest not dread it; nevertheless, I

shall be right glad if thou wilt lead me whither I ask thee.

P. I will teach thee by parables, as I have all along done; and yet I will say this, that there is nothing in that which men say, to wit, that a thing happens by chance. For each thing comes from some thing, and so does not happen by chance; whereas if it came from nothing it would happen by chance.

M. But whence came the name in the first place?

P. My favourite Aristotle treated of it in the book called Fisica (Physica).

M. How did he treat of it?

P. Men used formerly to say, when anything unlooked for took place, that it happened by chance; just as if a man were to dig in the earth, and find a gold-hoard there, and then said it happened by chance. Why, I know that if the delver had not dug the earth, and no man had hid the gold beforehand, he would not have found it. Therefore it was not found by chance; but the divine predestination instructed him that it wished to hide the gold, and afterwards him that it wished to find it.

Then said I, 'I perceive that it is as thou sayest; but I would ask thee whether we have any freedom or any power as to what we shall do, or what we shall not do; or does the divine foreordaining or Fate compel us to will?'

P. We have great power, and there is no reasoning creature but has freedom. He that has reason can judge and discern what he is to desire and what he

must

must shun. Every man has freedom, inasmuch as he knows what he wishes, and what he does not wish; yet not all reasoning creatures have like freedom. *Angels* have power to judge aright and a good purpose, and all that they desire they get with great ease, for they desire nothing wrong. Nothing has freedom and reason save *angels and* men. Men have always the more freedom the nearer to divine things they set their thoughts, and have the less freedom the closer they apply their minds' desire to worldly honours. They have no freedom when of their own will they bow themselves to vices; for as soon as they turn their minds from God they become blinded with folly. Howbeit, there is one *God* Almighty *in His high city*, who seeth every man's thoughts, and discerneth his words and his deeds, and rewardeth each according to his deserving.

XLI

WHEN Philosophy had spoken this discourse she fell to singing, and these were her words:

'Though Homer *the good poet, that was best among Greeks, and Firgilius'* (*Virgil's*) *teacher—Firgilius was the best among the Laedenwara* (Latins)—though Homer in his lays greatly praised the sun's nature, and his powers, and his brightness, yet the sun cannot shine upon all things, nor even, in

in those things that it can shine upon, is he able to shine upon them all alike, nor to shine through them within. But it is not thus with Almighty God, that is the Creator of all things. He seeth and gazeth into all His creatures equally, and He may without untruth be called the True Sun.'

When Philosophy had sung this song, she was silent a little while.

Then said I, 'A doubt has sorely perplexed me.'

P. What is it?

M. It is this. Thou sayest God gives to each man free choice to do as he pleases, whether good or evil, and thou sayest also that God knoweth everything before it comes to pass; further thou sayest nothing happens unless God will or suffer it, and lastly thou sayest that all must turn out as He hath appointed. Now I marvel why He suffereth wicked men to have freedom to do good or evil at will, when He knoweth beforehand that they will do evil.

P. I can answer this point very easily. How would it please thee if there were an exceeding mighty king that had no free man in all his realm, but all were slaves?

M. I should think it unjust, and not at all seemly, if he were served by slaves.

P. Yet it were still more unmeet if God had in all His kingdom no free creature under His rule. For He created two reasonable creatures free, angels and men; to them He gave the great gift of freedom, that they might do good or evil, whichever they pleased.

To

To every man until his end He hath given an abiding grace, and with the grace an abiding law; that is, freedom to do what he will, and the law whereby He rewardeth each according to his deeds, both in this world and in the world to come, with good or evil, according as the man acts. Men may by virtue of this freedom compass whatsoever they please, but Death they cannot escape. Still, they can keep him back with good deeds, so that he comes later; yea, at times they put him off even until old age. If it be not in a man's power to do a good deed, let him have the good intent, which is equally good.

M. Thou hast much comforted me in the doubt and perplexity I was in concerning this freedom. But I am still in much greater doubt, and sad well-nigh to despair.

P. What is this great sorrow?

M. It is about God's foreordaining, for we hear it said at times that all must come to pass as God in the beginning purposed, so that no man can change it. Now, I think He doeth amiss when He showeth favour unto the good, and also when He chastiseth the wicked, if it be true that they are so made as to be unable to act otherwise. Vain is our labour when we pray, and fast, or give alms, if we have no more credit for it than those that in all things follow their own will, and run after their carnal pleasure.

Then said she, 'This is the old complaint thou hast long been sounding, and many other men before thee. One of them was Marcus, *whose second name was*

was Tullius, *and who was called Cicero by a third name—he was a Roman chieftain, and a sage. He was greatly troubled with this very question, but could not bring it to any issue. The reason why neither he nor any man of that time could bring the question to any issue was because their minds were busied with desires of this world. But I tell thee that if what men say be true, then it was a vain commandment that God gave in the holy books that man should forswear evil and do good; and also where He said: "The more a man toileth, the greater the reward he shall receive." I marvel that thou hast forgotten all we said before.'*

'What,' I said, 'have I forgotten, that we said before?'

Then said she, 'We said that the divine purpose made all good and nothing evil, neither seeking to do evil nor ever doing it. Yea, we accounted that good which seemed evil to the common folk, namely, that a man is punished and chastised for his sin. Have we not also said in this very book that God purposed to bestow freedom upon men, and did so; and, if they used this freedom aright, that He would greatly honour them with life everlasting, and, if they misused their freedom, that He would punish them with death? He purposed that if they were guilty of any sin in this state of freedom they should atone for it in the free state with repentance; and that, if any one among them were so hard of heart as to repent not, he should suffer due punishment. All creatures He had de-

signed

signed to be without freedom, save angels and men. Inasmuch as other creatures are not free, they keep on with their ministry until the day of judgement; but men and angels, being free, dispense with service. What is there that men can say the divine purpose has resolved upon and not carried out? Or how can they say in excuse that they cannot do good, when it is written that God rewards each man according to his works? Why should any man therefore be idle, and not work?'

M. Thou hast quite freed me from my mind's doubt as to the question I put to thee. But I would further ask thee of another matter that makes me doubt.

P. What is it?

M. I know sufficiently well that God knoweth all beforehand, both good and evil, ere it come to pass; but I am not sure whether all that he knoweth and hath resolved shall all take place irrevocably.

P. It need not all take place irrevocably, but part of it must so happen, namely, that which is necessary for us and willed by Him. Some things, however, are of such a nature that there is no need for them, yet there is no harm in their happening, nor again in their not happening. Bethink thyself in thine own case whether thou hast ever resolved upon any thing so firmly that it seems to thee never capable of change, and that thou canst not do without it; or again, thou mayest be so uncertain in any course that it matters not to thee whether it take place or not. Many a thing

thing God knows of before it happens, and which He knows will harm His creatures if it happen. He knows it, not because He wishes it to happen, but because He wishes to prevent it from happening, even as a good steersman, by the raging of the sea, is aware of a great wind ere it come. He bids furl the sail and sometimes lower the mast, and let go the cables, and by making fast before the foul wind he takes measures against the storm.

Then said I, 'Greatly hast thou helped me in the matter, and I marvel why so many wise men have been at such pains therein and found so little certainty.'

'Why dost thou marvel thereat,' she said, 'when it is so easy to understand? Knowest thou not that many things are not perceived as they really are, but in accordance with the measure of the understanding that inquires into them? *Now Wisdom is of such kind that no man of this world can conceive her as she really is; but each strives according to the measure of his wit to understand her, if he may. But Wisdom is able to perceive us exactly as we are, though we may not be able to perceive her exactly as she is; for Wisdom is God. He beholdeth all our works, both good and evil, before they come to pass, before even they arise in thought; but He doth not any the more constrain us so that we are obliged to do good, nor hinder us from doing wrong, for He hath given us freedom.* I can show thee an example, so that thou mayest the more easily understand the argument. Lo

now,

now, thou knowest that sight and *hearing* and feeling perceive a man's body and yet do not apprehend it alike. *The ears perceive what they hear*, and yet do not altogether apprehend the body as it really is; touch may *grope and feel that it is a body, but it cannot feel if it be black or white, fair or foul.* But the sight, in the first moment that the eyes look upon it, takes in the whole form of the body. But I would show thee yet another argument, that thou mayest know what thou didst marvel at.'

'What is it?' I said.

Then said she, 'It is this, that a man perceives separately what he discerns in another man; he perceives him separately with the eyes, separately with the ears, and separately by his imagination, reason, and intuition. *There are many living creatures without motion, such as shell-fish, that nevertheless have a certain measure of reason, for they could not live if they had no jot of it. Some are able to see, some to hear, some to feel, others to smell. But moving creatures are more like unto men, for they all have not only that which creatures without movement have, but more to boot; they are like men in loving what they love, hating what they hate, shunning what they abhor, and seeking what they love. Now men have all that we have said, and in addition the mighty gift of reason, while angels have unerring intelligence (intuition). Creatures are thus made to the end that those without movement may not exalt themselves above those that move, nor strive with them; and that moving*

moving creatures may not rise above men, nor men above angels, nor angels above God. It is pitiful that the greater part of men seek not after that which has been given them, to wit, reason, nor seek that which is above them, possessed by angels and wise men, that is to say, intuition. But most men do like beasts in that they desire worldly delights like beasts. If, however, we had any portion of the unhesitating understanding that angels have, we might perceive that this understanding is far better than our reason. Though we think upon many things, we have but little perfect understanding free from doubt; but the angels have no doubt concerning any of the things they know, for their perfect knowledge is as much better than our reason, as our reason is better than the understanding of beasts or any part of the wit vouchsafed them, whether to those that move or to those that move not. But let us raise our minds as high as we can towards the crowning point of the highest intelligence, that thou mayest most speedily and easily come to thine own home whence thou didst once issue. There thy mind and thy reason may see clearly everything that is now in doubt, both as touching the divine foresight whereof we have often spoken, and concerning our freedom, and all things besides.'

After Philosophy had spoken this discourse, she began to sing, and these were her words:

'Lo! thou mayest perceive that there are many creatures moving over the ground most diverse in form and movement. Some lie with the whole body on the

the ground and move by creeping, so that neither feet nor wings help them; others are two-footed, others four-footed, others again flying, yet all are bent down towards the ground and seek there whatsoever they desire or need. But man alone walketh upright; and this is a token that he shall turn his thoughts rather upwards than downwards, lest the mind be lower than the body.'

XLII

AFTER Philosophy had sung this lay, she said: 'We ought with all our might to inquire about God, that we may know what He is. Though it be beyond our power to know what He is, yet we must try to know, according to the measure of the understanding He giveth us; even as we said before that a man should understand everything in the measure of his understanding, seeing that we cannot perceive each thing as it really is. Every creature, however, both reasoning and unreasoning, declares that God is eternal, *for never would so many creatures and so mighty and so fair have bowed themselves to a lesser creature and a lesser power than themselves, nor even to one equally great.*'

'*What is eternity?*' *I said.*

Then said she, '*Thou askest me a thing that is great and hard to understand; if thou wilt know it, thou must first have thine eyes clean and bright.*

I cannot

I cannot hide from thee aught that I know. Dost thou know that there are three things on this earth? The first lasts for a time only, and has both beginning and end; yet I know nothing of that which lasts for a time, neither its beginning nor its end. The second thing is eternal, and has beginning but no end; of this I know when it begins, and I know that it never ends; such are angels and men's souls. The third thing is eternal, without end and without beginning, even God. Between these three there is a great difference, but if we are to note every point thereof we shall come late to the end of this book, or never at all. One thing thereof, however, thou hast need to know, and that is, why God is called the Highest Eternity.'

'Why indeed?' I said.

'Inasmuch as we know,' said she, 'very little of what was before us save by memory and asking, and still less of what shall be after us, that only is with certainty present to us which exists at the time. But to God all is present, both that which was before and that which is now, yea, and that which shall be after us; all is present to Him. His wealth never waxeth, nor doth it ever wane. He never calleth aught to mind, for He hath never forgotten aught. He looketh for naught, pondereth naught, for He knoweth all. He seeketh nothing, for He hath lost nothing. He pursueth no creature, for none may flee from Him; nor doth He dread aught, for there is none more mighty, nor even like unto Him. He is ever giving,

yet

yet He never waneth in aught. He is ever almighty, for He ever willeth good and never evil. He needeth nothing. He is ever watching, never sleeping. He is ever equally kind. He is ever eternal, for the time never was when He was not, nor ever shall be. He is ever free, and not compelled to do any work. By virtue of His divine power He is everywhere present. His greatness no man can measure; yet this is to be conceived not as of the body but as touching the spirit, like wisdom and righteousness, which He is Himself. But why do ye men show pride, why raise yourselves against so high a power? Ye can do naught against Him, for the Eternal and the Almighty One is ever seated on the high seat of His authority, whence He can see all, and rewardeth each man very justly after his works. Therefore it is not in vain that we hope in God, for He changeth not as we do. Pray to Him humbly, for He is very generous, very merciful. *Lift up your hearts to Him when ye raise your hands, and pray for what is right and needful for you, for He will not deny you.* Hate evil, and flee from it as ye best may; love virtues and follow after them. Ye have great need that ye do what is good, for what ye do is ever done before the Eternal and the Almighty God; He seeth it all, *and all He requiteth.'*

FINIT.

THE LAYS OF BOETHIUS

PRELUDE

(Not in Boethius.)

Thus the old tale Alfred told us,
West Saxons' king. He shewed the cunning,
The craft of songmen. Keenly he longed
Unto the people to put forth songs
Men to make merry, manifold stories,
Lest a weariness should ward away
The man self-filled, that small heed taketh
Of such in his pride. Again I must speak,
Take up my singing, the tale far known
Weave for mortals; let who will listen.

LAYS

I

(Not in Boethius.) Cf. p. 1.

'Twas long ago when the eastern Goths
Sent from Scythia their swarms of shieldmen,
With multitudes harried many a nation.

Two tribes triumphant tramped to the south.
The Goths in greatness grew year by year;
Akin to the clansmen kings were there twain,
Raedgod and Aleric; they ruled in power.
O'er Jove's mountain came many a Goth
Gorged with glory, greedy to wrestle
In fight with foemen. The banner flashing
Fluttered on the staff. Freely the heroes
All Italy over were eager to roam,
The wielders of bucklers, bearing onward
E'en from Jove's mount on to ocean,
Where in sea-streams Sicily lieth,
That mighty island, most famous of lands.
Rudely the Roman rule was shattered;
The shieldmen sacked the glorious city;
Rome was ravaged; Raedgod and Aleric
Carried the fortress. Away fled the Caesar.
Aye, and his princes, off to the Greeks.
The luckless left ones, losing the combat,
To the Gothic foemen gave up all,
Unwilling forfeited their fathers' treasures,
Their holy allegiance; hard was the loss!
The hearts of the heroes held with the Greeks,
If they durst follow the folk's foemen.
Thus things stood; the folk was stressed
Many a winter, till Weird appointed
That Theodoric the thanes and nobles
Should lord it over. This leader of them
Was claimed by Christ, the king himself
Brought to baptism; a blessed day

For

For the sons of Rome. They sought right soon
Help from the high one; he then vowed
To give the Romans all rights olden,
Safe to sojourn in their wealthy city,
While God him granted the Goths' dominion
To own and possess. All this the prince broke,
Oath after oath; Arian error
He loved better than the law of the Lord.
The good Pope John he judged in his anger,
Reft of his head; a heinous deed!
Countless wrongs were likewise wrought
By the Gothic leader on each of the good.
In those days a leader in Rome was living,
A high-born chieftain. cherishing his lord,
While that the high-seat was held by the Greeks;
A man most righteous. He was 'mid the Romans
A giver of treasure, glorious ever,
Wise toward this world, wishful of honour,
Learned in booklore; Boethius the name was
That this hero had, that so highly was famed.
Time after time he turned in his mind
The evil and insult by alien princes
Grievously given. To the Greeks he was true,
Rememb'ring the honours and ancient rights
By his fathers aforetime fully enjoyed,
Their love and kindness. Then with cunning
He planned and brooded how he might bring
The Greeks to his country, that once more the Caesar
Might have full power o'er his people.
Then to their former lords letters of embassy

He sent in secret, summoning them by God,
By their former faith, forthwith to him
To speed Romewards; Greek senators
Should rule the Romans, their rights render
Free to the folk. When he found this out,
Theodoric the Amuling, the thane he had seized.
Charging the braves that did his bidding
To hold fast the hero; fierce was his heart,
The chieftain dreading. Deep in a dungeon
Bolted and barred he bade them cast him.
Then was the man's mood mightily troubled,
The mind of Boethius. Long had he borne
High state worldly; the harder it was
Bravely to bear this bitter fortune.
Sad was the hero; he hoped for no mercy,
Locked in prison; past all comfort
On the floor he fell with his face downwards,
Wofully spread, his sorrow speaking,
Hopeless utterly, ever weening
He should linger in fetters. He called on the Lord
With cheerless voice, and thus he chaunted.

II

Boeth. i. metr. 1. Cf. p. 2.

Ah! many a lay once so merrily
I sang in my joy. Now must *I sighing*,
Worn with weeping, a woful outcast,
Sing words of sorrow. Me hath this sobbing
And this wailing dazed, so that no more ditties

Can

Can I turn so featly, though many tales
Once I wove, when I was happy.
Oft now I find not the words familiar,
I that in old times oft made strange ones.
Me, wellnigh blind, have these worldly blessings
Drawn in my folly to this dim cavern,
And robbed me entirely of reason and comfort
With their false faith, when I had fain ever
To them trusted. To me they have turned
Their backs, oh! cruelly, and kept joy from me.
Ah! why were ye minded, my friends of this world,
In speech or in song to say I was happy
Here in this world? The words are not true ones.
For worldly blessings abide not always.

III

BOETH. I. metr. 2. Cf. p. 4.

Ah! it is fearful and fathomless deep,
The mirky pit where the mind toileth,
When the blasts of tempests beat against it
Of worldly afflictions; then in its fighting
Its own true light it leaveth behind it,
And in woe forgetteth the weal eternal.
It dasheth onward into this world's darkness,
Weary with sorrows. So hath it now
This soul befallen, for now it nought knoweth
Of good before God, but great grief
From the world unfriendly; it wanteth comfort.

O Thou

IV

Boeth. i. metr. 5. Cf. p. 5.

O Thou Creator of bright constellations,
Of heaven and earth; Thou on the high-seat
Eternal reignest and the round heaven
All swiftly movest, and through Thy holy might
The lights of heaven makest to hear Thee,
E'en as the sun scattereth darkness
Of the swart night time through Thy strong power.
And with her pale beams the bright stars
The moon doth humble, through Thy might's moving;
At whiles too she robbeth the radiant sun
Of his full light, when it befalleth
That they come together by close compulsion.
So too the glorious star of morning,
That we by its other name star of evening
Oft hear called, Thou constrainest
To follow the way where the sun wendeth;
Every year he must ever travel,
Fare before him. O Father, Thou sendest
Long days in summer with heat sultry;
To the winter also wondrous short days
Hast Thou granted. To the trees Thou givest
South-west breezes, when the black tempest
Sprung from the north-east had utterly stript them
Of every leaf with its loathly wind.
Behold, all creatures in the earth's compass
Obey Thy hests; the same do they in heaven
With mind and main, save man only;

He

He oftenest worketh in despite of Thy will.
Ah! Thou Eternal and Thou Almighty
Author and Ruler of all creation,
Pity the offspring of Thy poor world,
Even this race of men, through Thy mighty power.
Why, O God Eternal, grantest Thou ever
That Fate at the will of wicked mortals
Should turn herself on earth so swiftly?
Oft to the guiltless great harm she worketh.
The wicked are seated in worldly kingdoms
Upon their high-seats, trampling the holy
Under their feet; no man may find out
Why Fate falleth so foully awry.
So also are hidden here in this world
In many a borough brightest virtues,
Whereas the sinful in every season
Treat most evilly all those others
That are more righteous, to rule more worthy.
False-faced guile long hath gone
Wrapt up in wiles. Now here in the world
Oaths basely broken bring no scathe.
If Thou, O Chieftain, wilt not check Fate,
But sufferest her in self-will to remain,
Then this do I know, that nations will doubt
Far o'er earth's fields, all but a few.
O my Sovereign, Thou that seest
All worldly creatures, with eyes of kindness
Look on mortals, for they are moiling,
Battling here in the world's billows,
Poor folk of the earth; pity them therefore.

Thou

V

BOETH. i. metr. 7. Cf. p. 10.

Thou mayst by the sun see most clearly,
And by each of the other orbs of heaven
That shine most brightly over the boroughs,
If a dark cloud cometh before them
They cannot give forth such a bright gleam
Till the thick mist grow thinner before them.
So too the south breeze fiercely stirreth
The calm grey ocean clear as glass;
Then mighty billows mingle the waters,
Stir the whale-sea; fierce waxeth ocean
That but shortly before was blithe to look on.
Oft too the well-spring is wont to trickle
From the hoar cliff, cool and sparkling,
And onward flowing a straight course followeth,
To its home fleeteth, till there falleth upon it
A rock from the mountain, that lieth in its midst
Rolled from the peak; parted in twain
The rill is broken, the brook's clear water
Stirred and clouded; the stream is turned
Away from its course, cleft into runnels.
So now the darkness that dimmeth thy heart
Wisheth to turn back the light of my teaching,
And sorely trouble thy spirit's thoughts.
But if thou art willing, as well thou mayst be,
The light of the truth clearly to learn,
The brightness of faith, then shalt thou forsake
Vain surfeit of pleasure, profitless joys.

Thou

Thou shalt too forsake the evil fear
Of worldly afflictions, nor wax ever for them
Utterly hopeless; no, nor have thyself
Weakened with wealth, lest with it thou be
Brought to sorrow through the sin of pride,
And too puffed up by prosperous fortune,
By joys of the world. Nor again too feebly
Lose all thy faith in future good,
When in this world the weight of afflictions
Beareth on thee sorely, and thou art beset
With utter terror; for ever it tideth
That a man's breast is bound most firmly
With dire confusion if either of these dangers
Here may trouble him, torture his spirit.
For both these hardships, hand in hand,
A mist misleading draw over the mind,
So that the sun eternal its light may not send forth
For the black mists until these be blown away.

VI

Boeth. ii. metr. 3. Cf. p. 18.

Then Wisdom again unlocked her word-hoard,
Her tale of sooth sang in these words:
'While the bright sun most clear is beaming,
Gleaming in heaven, gloom enwrappeth
Over the world all other bodies;
For their light is nought, nothing at all,
When set against the sun's great brightness.
When softly bloweth from south and west

The

The wind 'neath heav'n, then soon wax
The flowers of the field, fain to be able.
But the stiff storm-wind, when it strongly bloweth
From out of the north-east, how soon it nippeth
The rose's beauty! By the northern blast
The spacious ocean is helpless spurned
Till strongly heaving it striketh the beach.
Alas, that in the world nothing weareth
Firm and lasting long on this earth!'

VII

Boeth. ii. metr. 4. Cf. p. 25.

Then did Wisdom follow her wont,
Glee-words chaunted, *changed song for speech.*
Of tales of sooth sang yet another:
'Never on high hill had she ever heard
That any of men might make to stand
A roof-fast hall; nor need any hope
To have the wit to mingle wisdom,
To put it together with pride o'erweening.
Heardest thou ever that any of mortals
On hills of sand his house could stablish
Firm to last him? Nor can any mortal
Build up wisdom, where the hill-side
Is spread with covetise. Quickly the rain
Is sucked by the sand; so do the great ones,
With their bottomless greed of goods and glory.
They drink to the dregs this dross so *fleeting.*
Yet the thirst of their craving is never cooled.

A man

A man may not build a house on a mountain
That may long tarry; soon the tempest
Swift on it sweepeth. Sand is useless
In deluge of rain to him that dwelleth
In the house as master; it melteth away,
In the rain sinketh. So with every man;
His inmost mind is mightily shaken,
Stirred from its station, when the strong winds
Of earthly troubles toss and tease it,
Or when the ruthless rain of affliction,
Boundless distress, dasheth upon it.
But he that ever wisheth to own
True joy eternal must turn and flee
This world's beauty. Then let him build
The house of his soul so that he find
The Rock of Humility, hard and fastest,
Sure foundation; he shall not slip
Though that the tempest of worldly troubles
Or flood of worries fiercely assail it.
For in that Vale of the Lowly the Lord Himself
Ever abideth, owneth His Home;
And there too Wisdom in memory waiteth.
A life without sorrow he always leadeth
That chooseth wisdom; it never changeth,
Since he disdaineth delights of the world,
From every evil utterly free:
He hopeth in eternity hereafter to come.
Him then everywhere God Almighty
Keepeth always, ever unceasing,
Fast abiding in the blessed joys

Of

Of his own mind, through the Master's grace,
Though oft the winds of worldly troubles
Batter and bruise him, or never bating
Cares be fretting, when the fierce gusts
Of worldly blessings blow unkindly,
Though him ever the endless worry
Of earthly fortune sore confound him.'

VIII

BOETH. ii. metr. 5. Cf. p. 33.

After Wisdom these words had spoken,
Clearly set forth, soon she began
Sooth words to sing, and thus she spake:
'Oh! the ancient days for all earth-dwellers
Throughout the world were ever the best.
Then was each man ever contented
With fruits of the earth; 'tis otherwise now.
Not then in the world were wealthy homes,
Nor many kinds of meat and drink;
Nor aught of raiment recked men then,
In these days to men of all things dearest;
For then such was not seen as yet,
Never the sea-folk had seen it at all.
No, nor anywhere of it had heard.
Ah! then the sin of lust they longed not to do,
But in degree they duly followed
The call of nature as Christ appointed.
But one meal daily they always made
Of the earth's increase, at hour of even,

Of plant

Of plants of the wood. No wine they drank
Bright from the bowl; none could boast
Skill to mingle drink with his meat,
Water with honey, nor to fashion by sewing
Clothing of silk; nor had they cunning
In costly stuffs; nor stood there halls
Cleverly planned; but it was their custom
In every season to sleep in the open
In the deep tree-shade. They drank burn-water
Cool from the spring. Never did chapman
See o'er the sea-surge the shore of strange land;
Nor had men heard of the harrying ship-host;
No, nor was fighting familiar to mortals.
Not as yet was the earth anywhere stained
With the blood of a man nor the dye of the blade,
Nor even one wounded had any man witnessed
Under the sun. So too none was worthy
Held in the world if his will seemed
Evil unto men; by all was he loathed.
Oh! were it true, or would God but grant
That here on earth in our days now,
O'er the wide world, man's wont was such
Under the sun! But now 'tis more sinful,
For covetous greed so cloggeth the soul
Of every man that he heedeth not other things,
And in the mind boiling it burneth ever,
This curse of covetise, never contented,
Black and bottomless blazeth smould'ring,
E'en as the mountain that mortals call
By name of Etna; this on an island,

Even

Even Sicily, with sulphur burneth,
Hell-fire widely hight by mortals,
For unceasing it smould'reth ever,
And all around it the rest of the land
It fiercely blasteth with blaze consuming.
Ah! who was the first that filled with greed
Dwelt in the world, and dug the ground
In quest of gold and curious jewels?
Wealth did he find, fatal to many,
In the world hidden in water or earth.

IX

Boeth. ii. metr. 6. Cf. p. 40.

We all have heard what hateful deeds
Far and near Nero wrought,
King of the Romans, when that his rule
Was first under heaven, fatal to many.
The fierce one's madness men widely knew,
His lawless lust and laches unnumbered,
His sins and murders, misdeeds many,
The cursed wiles of that wicked one.
He bade for his sport with fire destroy
The city of Rome that was the seat
Of full dominion, for in his folly
He fain would try whether the fire,
Flaming brightly, would burn as long,
Would rage as red, as the Romans told
That Troy town was of old o'ertaken
By the brightest of flames that longest burned

In

In homes under heaven. A hideous thing,
To take his pleasure in such perilous sport,
Nought else gaining, this only regarding,
To make his power far over peoples
Widely renownèd, over the nations.
It likewise betided once on a time
That this same man sent to murder
All the rulers of the Senate of Rome,
And all the best by birth as well
That he could find among his folk;
And his own brother besides he bade,
Yea, and his mother, be murdered with swords,
Killed with blade-edge. He himself butchered
His bride with the brand, and ever was blither,
Gayer of mood, the more of such murder,
Such hateful wrong, he wrought on mortals.
Nought did he heed whether hereafter
The mighty Master would mete out vengeance,
Wreak on the wicked their wrongful deeds,
But in his soul was glad of his guile and sins,
Bloodthirsty ever. But notwithstanding,
He governed all of this glorious world,
Where air and sea encircle the land
And the deep sea enringeth this realm of mortals,
The seats of men, south, east and west,
Right to the northmost nesses of earth.
All bowed to Nero, for need or pleasure;
None was there of men but must obey him.
When his pride was highest 'twas a pretty jest
How the kings of the earth he killed and harried!

Dost

Dost thou gainsay that God Almighty
Could most readily wrest his power
From the boastful scourge, and strip him bare
Of all dominion through the might eternal,
Or utterly curb the course of his sins?
Oh, that He would only, as He easily might,
All such felony fain forbid him!
Oh, 'twas no light yoke which that lord planted,
A grievous annoy, on the necks of his thanes,
Of all his lieges that in his lifetime
O'er this brittle world were fated to bide!
He with the gore of guiltless men
Fouled his sword-blade, full many 's the time.
Thus we see clearly, as we have oft said,
That dominion can do no good
If he that hath gained it have no good will.

X

Boeth. ii. metr. 7. Cf. p. 47.

If any living man longeth for glory,
And fame without gain would fain have for his own,
Then with my words would I beseech him
On all sides about him far out to spy,
Clearly to look, south, east, and west,
And consider how broad with the clouds all about
Is the vault of the sky. So may the wise man
Easily deem this earth of ours
By the side of that other wondrously small,
Though to the witless wide it seemeth,

To

To straying men strong in its place.
Yet may the sage deep in his spirit
Feel great shame for the lust of glory,
When the thirst for fame fiercely presseth,
Although he may not make it to spread,
In no wise whatever, over these narrow
Quarters of earth. How idle is glory!
Why ever, O proud ones, take ye pleasure
To bow your own necks beneath the yoke
Heavy and grievous, glad that ye may?
Why do ye labour so long in vain,
Aim to possess fame in the world,
Over the nations, more than ye need?
Though it befell that southward and north
The uttermost denizens, dwellers of earth,
In many a tongue intoned your praises;
Though you were known for noblest birth,
Worshipped for wealth, waxing in splendour,
Dear for your valour; Death heedeth these not
When heaven's Governor giveth him leave.
But the wealthy man, and the wanting in goods,
Death maketh equal, in all things alike.
Where now are the wise one's, Weland's bones,
The worker in gold, once greatest in glory?
I ask where the bones of Weland are buried;
For never any that on earth liveth
May lose any virtue lent him by Christ;
Nor may one poor wretch be robbed with more ease
Of his soul's virtue, than may the sun
Be swung from his path, or the swift heavens

Moved from their courses by the might of a man.
Who now is aware of wise Weland's bones,
In what barrow lying they litter the ground?
Where is the senator so mighty of Rome,
The bold champion of whom we chaunt,
Head of their army, he that the name
Amid the burghers of Brutus bore?
Where is the wise one that wished for fame,
The people's shepherd, steadfast of purpose,
That was a sage in each thing several,
Keen and the cunning, Cato was hight?
Many long days ago these men departed;
No man knoweth now where they be.
What is left of them but their fame alone?
Too slight is the glory of such teachers.
For they were worthy, were those heroes,
Of more in the world. But worse it is now,
When over the earth, in every quarter,
They and those like them are little spoken of,
And some not a few are clean forgotten,
And their fame cannot keep them longer
Known to all men, noble heroes.
Though ye now deem, desire strongly,
That long in the land your life may last,
How ever the better can ye be or seem?
For Death no man leaveth, though long it seem,
His life-days told, if the Lord it alloweth.
But what profit doth a mortal possess
In this world's glory, if he be gripped
By death everlasting after this life?

There

XI

Boeth. ii. metr. 8. Cf. p. 50.

There is one Creator, we cannot doubt,
And He controlleth every creature
Of heaven and of earth, and of the high seas,
And all the things that therein dwell,
Of those unseen, and likewise of such
As with our eyes we are able to see,
Of all creation; Almighty is He.
Him humbly court all things created
That of their service have any knowledge,
And none the less of those that know not
That they minister unto the Master.
In us He created ways and customs,
And for all His creatures peace unaltered,
Never ceasing in its nature,
When that He wished whatever pleased Him,
As long as He liked should live and last.
So it shall be, and for ever abide;
For never they may, the moving creatures,
Cease from their motion, sink into rest,
Swerve from the way that the Warden of heaven
Hath appointed for all in order unchanging.
The King of all things hath His creation
Bound with His bridle; both hath He done,
Governed each one and guided them too,
So that they may not against the Master's will
Ever cease moving, nor ever again
Go any more than the Guarder of glory

Will grant unto them His reins of guidance.
He hath with His bridle bound earth and heaven,
And the whole circle of deep sea-waters.
Thus hath He curbed, the King of heaven,
With His control, all of His creatures,
So that the one striveth with other,
And loth to his fellow fast doth cleave,
Firm upholdeth, fast enclaspeth,
Lest they dash asunder. For ever their duty
Again to circle on the self-same journey
That at the first the Father appointed,
And ever renewed again to revive.
So is it fashioned, the framework ancient,
That warring in hate the hostile creatures
Fast and for ever firm peace maintain.
Thus fire and water, firm land and ocean,
And things many more, in just the same manner
Over the wide world are warring together;
Yet can they keep their course of service,
Fellowship holding firm and abiding.
Nor is it merely matter of wonder
That things full of hate fare together,
Remaining fellows; more fit for marvel
That none of them ever can live without other,
But every thing made his opposite meeteth
Under the heavens, that humbleth his pride
Ere that it grow too great to be borne.
He hath, the Almighty, to every creature
Appointed its course that it must keep;
Growth for plants, green for leaves

That

That in autumn later languish and fall.
Winter bringeth very cold weather;
Swift are its winds; summer then cometh,
The warm weather; Lo! the wan night
Is lit by the moon, till the morn is brought
To men by the sun o'er this spacious world.
He hath, the same God, to sea and land
Their boundaries fixed; the flood dareth not
Over earth's borders her sway to broaden
For the tribe of fishes, without the Lord's favour;
Nor may she ever the threshold of earth
Lightly o'ertread; nor may the tides either
Bear the water over earth's borders.
These are the commands that the glorious King,
The Bright Life-Giver, doth let while He will
Keep within bounds His noble creatures;
But when the Eternal and the Almighty
Looseth the reins that rule all creatures,
Even the bridle wherewith He bound
All that He fashioned at the first creation
(By the bridle we speak of we seek to betoken
The case where things are all conflicting):
If the Lord letteth the bridle loosen,
Forthwith they all leave love and peace,
The friendly union of their fellowship.
All things whatever their own will follow,
All world-creatures shall war together,
Till this our earth utterly perish,
And so also other things, in the same fashion,
By their own nature become as nought.

But

But the same God that governeth all things,
Bringeth together, many folk bindeth,
And firmly uniteth in friendship's bonds;
He linketh in wedlock the love that is pure
In peaceful mateship. So too the Mighty One
Fellow to fellow firmly joineth,
So that their friendship forth and for ever
They hold, and their faith fast undoubting,
Their peace unvarying. O God of victory,
Most happy indeed were mankind's lot,
If but their hearts could hold their course
Steadily steered by Thy strong might,
And evenly ordered as the others are also
The world's creatures! Yea, it were truly
Right merry for men, might it so be!

XII

BOETH. iii. metr. 1. Cf. p. 54.

Whoso fertile land fain would till,
Let him promptly pluck from the field
Fern and thorn, and furze-bush also,
The weeds, in all places eager to injure
The wheat clean-sprinkled, lest it sproutless
Should lie on the land. To all folk likewise
This next example no less suiteth:
The comb of the honey cannot but seem
To each son of men sweeter by half,
If he have tasted before the honey
Aught that is bitter. Even thus also

To

To every mortal more welcome by far
Is gentle weather, when just before
Storms have assailed him, and the stiff wind
Out of the north-east. No man would reckon
Daylight a blessing if the dark night
Had not for mortals mustered terrors.
So of earth-dwellers to each it seemeth
That blessedness true is ever the better,
More winsome by far, the more he of woe,
Of cruel hardships, here endureth.
So thou the sooner may'st in thy soul
The truest of blessings trace more clearly,
And to their source soonest arrive,
If first and foremost forth from thy breast,
Root and branch, thou upwrenchest
Happiness false, e'en as the farmer
From his field plucketh ill weeds a plenty.
Then, I warrant thee, thou wilt clearly
Forthwith recognize real blessings,
And thou wilt never have heed for aught else,
When all plainly thou dost perceive them.

XIII

Boeth. iii. metr. 2. Cf. p. 60.

In song will I again send forth the tidings,
How the Almighty, all things' Ruler,
With bridle urgeth, bendeth at will
His creatures with might and due measure,
Marvellous well maketh them hold.

The

The Wielder of heaven hath welded together,
Wrapt all his creatures round and about,
Fixed with fetters, so that they fail ever
To find any road to wrest themselves free.
And yet every creature courseth along,
Onward bending, bound for its goal,
Seeking the kind that the King of angels,
The Father at first, firmly appointed.
So now all things are thitherward moving,
The spacious creation, save certain angels,
Save man also. Many, too many
Dwellers in the world war with their nature!
Though thou a she-lion should meet in the land,
A winsome creature wondrously tame,
Loving her master with lively affection,
And yet every day dreading him also,
If it befall that savour of blood
She ever tasteth, truly none needeth
Ever to hope that she will hold fast
To her tameness after; well do I trow,
New as it is, no more she will heed it,
But her wild wont will soon remember,
The way of her fathers. Fierce she beginneth
To rend her fetters, to roar and growl,
And first she biteth, before all others,
Her own house-master, and hastily thereafter
Each single man that she may meet;
Naught she leaveth that owneth life,
Nor beast nor man, mangling all she findeth.
Thus too the wood-birds, wondrous gentle,

Truly

Truly tame, if they come to the trees
In the heart of the holt, soon they heed not
Those that taught them, who long time before
Trained them and tamed them. Wild in the trees
Ever thereafter their ancient nature
They gladly follow, though fain would their teachers
With cunning tricks offer them tempting
Even the food that in former days
To tameness enticed; the twigs so pleasant
Seem to their minds, the meat they heed not,
So winsome for them when woodland soundeth,
When they can hear the piping choir
Of other song-birds; then do they send
Their own notes forth. All together
The sweet song raise; the wood is ringing.
So too with each tree whose nature 'tis
That in the grove it groweth highest,
Though that thou bend a bough to the ground,
It upward leapeth when thou leavest
The wood to its will; it wendeth to its kind.
So too the sun when that it sinketh,
Noon long past; the shining lamp
Hasteneth sinking, on his unseen journey
Ventureth by night; then in the north-east
To men appeareth, to earth-dwellers bringeth
Clear-bright morning, and o'er men mounteth,
Upward ever, until he cometh
To the topmost station where he highest standeth.
Thus every creature with all its might,
Through this wide world, wendeth and hasteneth

With

With all endeavour, eager to come
Once more to its kind as soon as it can.
On earth there now liveth no single creature
That craveth not one day to come
Back to its home whence it once hied.
Here no care racketh, here rest is eternal;
'Tis God Almighty, as all men know.
Over the earth now there liveth no creature
That spinneth not round and on itself turneth,
E'en as a wheel; for it so whirleth
That at last it standeth in its ancient station;
And ever as soon as it hath spun round,
When all its round *is* run to the end,
Then duly again it *shall* do what *it did*,
And be yet again what it was of yore.

XIV

BOETH. iii. metr. 3. Cf. p. 65.

What availeth the greedy one in earth's goods wealthy,
What boot for his mind, though much he owneth
Of gold and of gems, and every thing good,
And countless possessions; and though his ploughs till
Each day for him a thousand acres?
What though this mid-earth, and this race of men,
Under the sun, south, west, and east,
In his dominion are all dependent,
When none of his trappings can he take away hence
Out of this world, no, not one more
Of his hoarded treasures than he brought hither?

Though

XV

Boeth. iii. metr. 4. Cf. p. 69.

Though the unrighteous evil monarch,
Nero the king, decked him anew
In fairest raiment in wondrous fashion,
With gold adorned, and goodly jewels,
Yet through the world by all men of wisdom
In the days of his life he was loathed and scorned,
Filled with all sin. This foe of men
To all his darlings dealt high favours;
Yet I cannot conceive how they could hold
Themselves aught the better. Though for a season
He chose them without virtue, this most witless king,
Yet no wise man worshipped them the more.
Though the man of folly make himself king,
How can he reckon, the man of right reason,
That he is aught better, or even so seemeth?

XVI

Boeth. iii. metr. 5. Cf. p. 73.

He that seeketh power must first strive
That he may of himself in his mind within
Lordship compass, lest he may be ever
To his sinful ways utterly subject.
From out of his spirit let him speedily pluck
The manifold cares that carry no profit;
Let him cease a while his mournful sighing

For

For his evil fortune ; though all be his,
This world of ours, where'er begirdled
By ocean-waters, to him only given,
As far away as in the west
Outermost lieth an isle in ocean,
Where never is night known in summer,
Nor is the day in winter divided,
Into times parted, Tile (Thule) men call it—
Though that a man be sole master
Of all this island, and from thence onward
E'en to the Indies out in the east—
Yea, though all this be his own to govern,
How is his might any the more,
If of himself control he hath not,
Nor of his thoughts, nor thoroughly strive
Well to beware in word and in deed
Of all the sins of which we were speaking ?

XVII

BOETH. iii. metr. 6. Cf. p. 75.

All earth-dwellers one origin had,
All men of the land, one like beginning ;
From one pair only all proceeded,
From a man and woman, within the world ;
And to this day even all men alike,
The base and the high ones, are born in the world.
Nor is that a marvel, for all men know
That there is one God of all world-creatures,
Lord of mankind, Father and Maker.

He

He the sun lendeth, light out of heaven,
To moon and stars; on earth He made men,
And brought to the body in the beginning
The soul in union; under the sky
Folk He created all fully equal.
Why are ye therefore yourselves o'er others
Placing ever, proud without reason,
When none ye are able to meet not noble?
Why are ye boasting now of your birth?
In the mind only of every man lieth
The real nobility whereof I reason,
Not in the flesh of the folk of earth.
But every mortal that is utterly,
Merely subject to his sinful ways,
Soonest leaveth life's Creator;
Nor doth he heed his own high nature,
No, nor the Father that first him fashioned.
For this the Almighty removeth his honour,
So that henceforth here in the world
He goeth dishonoured, nor cometh to glory.

XVIII

Boeth. iii. metr. 7. Cf. p. 77.

Alas! that wrongful unrighteous desire,
Frenzied lewdness leadeth to this,
That of all mankind it mazeth the mind,
Of each and all men, wellnigh utterly.
Lo! the wild bee is wise of nature,
Yet must perish all in a moment,

If in her anger aught she stingeth.
So too a man's soul soon shall die,
If that the body becometh baser
By carnal desire, unless there come first
Regret to his heart ere he hence wendeth.

XIX

BOETH. iii. metr. 8. Cf. p. 80.

Oh! sore is the folly, consider it who will,
And full of peril for every person,
That wretched mortals utterly mazeth,
And far from the right road rapidly leadeth!
Have ye the will to seek in the woodland
Bright red gold among green trees?
Well do I know that no wise man
Will seek it there, since there it is not,
Nor look in vineyards for lustrous gems.
Why do ye not hang nets on the hill-tops
When ye would fain fishes capture,
Salmon and herrings? It seemeth likely
That dwellers on earth, all of them, know,
Men of sense, that such live not there.
Will ye go hunting, with hounds follow,
In the salt sea, when ye would seek
Harts and hinds? Hast thou not knowledge
That such as these thou must seek in forests
More oft by far than out in ocean?
Marvellous it is that all men know
That by the sea-shore search must be made,

And

And by river-beaches, for brightest jewels,
White and crimson, and of every colour.
Yea, they know also where it is needful
Fishes to seek. and many such things,
The wealth of the world. Well they do so,
Men all yearning, year's end to year's end.
But of all things this is most wretched,
That fools have become so utterly blind,
In midst of error, that in mind they cannot
Readily tell where blessings eternal,
Happiness true, are hidden away,
For they will not follow in their footsteps
Nor seek the blessings; reft of sense,
In this frail life they think to find it,
True Happiness, God Himself.
I know no means whereby I may
Within my breast blame as severely
Such men's folly, as fain I would do;
Nor can I tell thee with full clearness;
For they are feebler and more foolish,
More severed from blessing, than I can set forth.
Wealth and possessions, these they wish for,
And men's worship they are eager to win.
When they have compassed what their mind craveth,
Then do they witless ween in their folly
That True Happiness they have at last.

XX

Boeth. iii. metr. 9. Cf. p. 87.

O my Master, Thou art Almighty,
Great and noble, in glory famous;
And Thou art wonderful to all with wisdom!
O Thou God Eternal of all creation,
Thou hast wondrously well created
Unseen creatures, and also those
That are seen of men! Softly Thou rulest
The bright creation with Thy craft
And power of wisdom. Thou to this world
From first beginning forth to the ending
Hast dealt out seasons, as it most suited,
In regular order, such that they ever
Are faring out, or else returning.
Thou Thy creatures that cannot move
Unto Thy will wisely compellest,
Thyself abiding still and stirless,
And unchanging for ever and ever.
None is mightier, none more famous,
Nor midst all creatures is Thy match to be found.
And as yet never hast Thou felt need
Of all the works which Thou hast wrought,
But by Thy will all Thou hast worked,
And with the power that Thou possessest
Thou hast made the world and every wight;
Yet no need hadst Thou, none whatever,
Of all this grandeur. 'Tis great, the nature
Of Thy goodness, regard it who will;

For

For they are one only in every wise,
Thou and Thy goodness. This is Thine own,
For not from without to Thee hath it come.
But this I guess surely, that Thy goodness is
Goodness almighty, Thyself, O God;
It is unlike ours in nature;
From outside cometh all we contain
Of good in the world, from God Himself.
Thou hast no anger to aught conceived,
For to Thee nothing knoweth likeness;
No, nor even is aught more crafty;
For Thou all goodness by Thy contriving,
Alone in Thy counsel carried it out.
Ere Thee there was not any creature
Either to do or to leave undone;
But without pattern, Prince of mankind,
God Almighty, all Thou wroughtest,
All very good. Thou art Thyself
The Highest Good. Ah! Thou, holy Father,
After Thy will the world createdst,
This earth with Thy might madest to be,
O Chief of hosts, as Thou didst choose,
And with Thy will wieldest all things.
So Thou, true God, Thyself grantest
All good that is; for long ago
Thou all Thy creatures first createdst
Strongly alike; yet some there were
Not like in nature. One name Thou gavest,
One name only, to all together,
World under sky. O God of splendour!

This single name Thou partedst since,
Father, into four: first the earth,
Second water, part of the world,
Thirdly fire, and fourthly air;
These four together form the world.
Yet each of these four hath its own birthplace,
Each possesseth its proper station,
Though each of them be with the other
Much commingled, and with the might also
Of the Father Almighty firmly united,
In harmony single, smoothly together,
By Thy command, O kindly Father,
So that none of them o'er another's bounds
Dareth trespass, for dread of the Lord,
But these servants together suffer union,
The King's champions, chill with heat,
Wet with dryness; yet are they warring.
Water and earth all increase bring,
Cold in their ways the one and the other;
Water wet and cold round the land windeth,
The all-green earth, yet either is cold.
Air is a mixture in the midst dwelling;
Nought should we wonder that it is warm and cold,
The wet cloudbank by the wind blended;
For midmost it lieth, as men hear tell,
'Tween fire and earth. Full many know
That highest o'er earth of all things created
Fire liveth, and land is lowest.
Oh, 'tis wonderful, Chief of war-hosts,
That with Thy bare thought Thou bringest to pass

That

That to every creature with clear distinction
Thou hast fixed its marches, yet hast not mixed them
Lo! for the water wet and cold
The land as a floor firm hast Thou laid;
For never quiet, to every quarter
Far would it flow, feeble and yielding;
'Twould never be able, for a truth do I know,
To stand by itself, but the earth it supporteth.
And some of it also sucketh adown,
So that thereafter it may for the soaking
Be washed with showers. Wherefore leaf and grass
Broad over Britain are blooming and growing,
A boon to mortals. The cold earth bringeth
Countless fruits of marvellous kinds,
For with the water wet it becometh.
But if this were not so, then would it certainly
Dry up to dust, and then be driven
By the wind afar, as oft it befalleth
That over the land ashes are blown.
On earth nothing were able to live,
Nor would it any more enjoy the water,
Nor dwell in it ever by any device,
For mere coldness, if Thou, King of angels,
Somewhat with fire the land and sea-stream
Had not mingled, and meetly measured
Cold with heat by Thy cunning power,
So that fire cannot lurid consume
Earth and sea, though it be seated
Firmly in either, the Father's old work.
None the less marvel to me it seemeth

That earth and ocean are all unable,
Though both cold creatures, by any contrivance
Fully to quench the fire within them,
Therein planted by the Lord's power.
Now this is a property possessed by waters,
To live upon earth and in the clouds also,
And even on high above the heavens.
Then the rightful region of fire,
Its native home, is high o'er all creatures
That we may behold o'er this wide world;
Though it is mingled with every member
Of world-creatures, it cannot avail
To deal to one of them deadly damage,
Save by the leave of our Life-Giver,
Even the Eternal Almighty God.
More heavy is earth than other creatures,
More stoutly welded; for during a space
Beneath creation it nethermost lay,
Save only the firmament that this broad fabric
Outside and around each day circleth,
Yet never toucheth the earth anear,
Nor may it in one place more than another
Nearer reach; round it speedeth
Above and beneath, yet equally near.
Every creature whereof we recount
Hath for itself its separate home;
Yet is it likewise linked with others,
Nor may one live lonely ever,
Though dimly seen be their dwelling together.
Thus earth in fire and water is found;

The

The poor of wit have pains to see it,
But to the wise well it is known.
So too is fire fixed fast in water,
And in the stones still it lurketh;
'Tis hard to see, 'tis there, however.
The Father of angels hath bound the fire
So fast and firmly that it cannot fly
Again to the region where the rest of the fire
High o'er this world in its home dwelleth.
Soon it forsaketh this frail creation,
O'ercome by cold, if it seeketh its country;
Yet every creature craveth to go
Where its kin it findeth most crowded together.
Thou hast establish'd through Thy strong might,
King of war-hosts, in wondrous wise
The earth so firmly that she inclineth
Nought to one side, nor may she sink
This way nor that way more than she was wont,
By nought upheld of earthly nature.
It is equally easy upward or downward
For this earth of men to move at will;
This is most like to an egg, where lieth
The yolk in the middle, yet the shell moveth
Around outside; so standeth the world
Still in its station; with the streams round it,
The stirring floods, the air and stars,
While the gleaming shell round all glideth
Every day, and long hath done so.
O God of the nations! of threefold nature
A soul Thou hast given us, that Thou since

Movest

Movest and guidest through Thy strong might,
So that no less thereof liveth
In a single finger, even the smallest,
Than in the whole body. But a little ago
I clearly sang that the soul was
In every thane a threefold creature,
For all sages this do say,
That three natures are seen in every soul;
Passion first cometh, second desire;
The third is by nature nobler than the others,
Reason we call it; it causeth no shame,
For the beasts have it not, but to man it belongeth.
Countless creatures contain the two others;
Nearly every beast boasteth desire,
And likewise passion each possesseth;
Wherefore mankind, over the world,
Has other creatures all surpassed;
For what men have the others have not,
E'en that single virtue of which we have sung.
This mighty reason in every man
Shall ever subdue desire to itself,
And likewise passion hold in its power.
She with thought the mind of a thane,
And with reflection shall rule in all things.
She hath most might in man's spirit,
And is most perfect of all his powers.
Lo! Thou the Soul, Sender of triumph,
High King of nations, thus didst create,
So that it turneth and turneth about,
Round itself moving, e'en as all moveth,

The

The swift firmament fleetly whirling,
Every day, by the Lord's great doing,
This earth encircling. So doth man's soul;
Like to a wheel she whirleth round herself,
Ofttimes thinking of that which is earthly,
The Lord's creatures daily and nightly;
Sometimes in thought she seeketh herself,
At others giveth heed to God Eternal,
Her own Creator. In course she goeth
Most like to a wheel, on herself whirling.
When deeply she museth on Him who made her,
Then up she is raised over herself;
But in her own self she ever abideth,
When in her fancy she followeth herself.
Lastly she falleth beneath herself far
When she admireth these frail things earthly,
And loveth them all more than law eternal.
O God of ages, Thou gavest a home
In heaven to souls; Thou sendest them freely
Glorious gifts, God Almighty,
In measure fitting the merits of each!
These all are beaming bright in the heavens
In the clear night, but nevertheless
Not equal in light; lo! we see often,
When serene is the night, the stars in heaven,
Not all beaming with equal brightness.
O God Everlasting! Thou didst also unite
A thing of heaven to the earthly here,
Soul to body; ever since they abide,
Both the eternal and earthly together,

The

The soul in the flesh. See, ever to Thee
They yearn to go hence, for from Thee hither
They had their source, and shall seek Thee again.
But the body of man must ever abide
Here on the earth, for coming from her
He grew in the world. Together they were
No longer nor less than to them was allowed
By the Almighty, who ages aforetime
Made them comrades; the true King is He.
He fashion'd the land, and filled it thereafter
With manifold races, as men have told me,
And sorts of beasts, mankind's Saviour.
Then did He sow many a seed
Of trees and plants in the tracts of earth.
Grant to our minds, God Eternal,
That they may to Thee, Master of all things,
Through these miseries mount to heaven,
And from these cares, kindly Father,
Ruler of nations, may rise to Thee;
That then with eyes open we may be able
With the eyes of the mind, through Thy aid mighty.
The fount to gaze on of all goodness,
Thyself to view, victorious God.
Grant strong sight to the gaze of our minds,
That we may on Thyself be able thereafter
To fix them firmly, Father of angels.
Scatter the mist that now for a season
Before the eyes of our understanding
Thickly hath hung, heavy and darksome.
Send, we pray Thee, to our spirits' eyes

Thine

Thine own light, Ruler of life;
For Thou art the brightness, benign Father,
Of the true Light; likewise Thou art Thyself
The firm rest, Father Almighty,
Of all the true ones. Tenderly Thou suff'rest
That they may behold Thee, Yea, Thyself even.
Thou art of all things, O nations' Ruler,
Beginning and end. O angels' Father,
Of all things Thou bearest the burden lightly,
Never wearied. Thyself art the Way,
Aye, and the Guide, of all things living,
And the goodly Bourne to which the Way bendeth.
To Thee all mortals are moving ever,
All men from below, in the bright creation.

XXI

Boeth. iii. metr. 10. Cf. p. 100.

O sons of mankind, o'er earth moving,
Let each that hath freedom find out the way
To the eternal goodness whereof our speech is,
And to the blessings that are our song's burden.
The man that is straitly bound by the sway
Of the worthless love of this world glorious,
Let him right soon seek for himself
Fullness of freedom, that forthwith he may come
Into the blessings of the Bidder of spirits;
For this is the rest from all our wrestling,
The hopeful haven for the high vessels
Of the minds of us men, mild harbour bright.

This is the only hithe we ever shall have
After the tossing of troublous billows,
After each tempest, truly peaceful.
This is the sanctuary, the sole comfort
Of all weary mortals, when they are over,
Our worldly troubles; 'tis the winsome bourne
That shall be ours to own after these hardships.
But well do I trow, no treasure golden,
No jewel of silver, no gem of cunning,
No wealth of this world will ever illumine
The eyes of the mind; nor do they amend
Their keenness of sight so that they spy
Bliss unfeigned; but they far more
The eyes of the mind of every man
Blind in his breast than make them brighter.
So each of the things that now on earth
In this their life is loved by mankind,
Frail and earthly, fleeteth away.
But they be wondrous, the Beauty and Brightness
That give brightness and beauty to each,
And possess ever after power over all.
It is not the will nor the wish of the Ruler
That our souls should perish, but He preferreth
With light to fill them, life's Controller.
If any wight therefore with his eyes undimmed,
The glance of his spirit, may ever gaze on
The clear brightness of the heavenly beam,
Then will he say that the sun's shining
Is merely darkness to the mind of each man.
If it be measured with the mighty light

Of God Almighty; for every spirit
'Tis ceaseless, eternal, for the souls of the blest.

XXII

Boeth. iii. metr. 11. Cf. p. 107.

He that desireth the Right in due measure,
In its inner nature anxious to track,
And know it fully so that none be able
To drive it out, nor anything earthly
Have power to hinder: first him behoveth
In his own soul to seek what he earlier
During a season sought from without.
Then let him bring it forth from his bosom,
And leave behind, as long as he may,
Every sorrow that serveth for nought;
And let him muster with might and with main
Each thought within him to that end only.
Let him say to his mind, that it may find
Within itself only all that it now
Oftenest seeketh ever outside,
Every goodness. Then he getteth to know
Things evil and idle, all that he had,
Hid in his bosom so long before,
Even as clearly as he can the sun
Behold with the eyes of this present body;
And he moreover his mind perceiveth
Lighter and brighter than is the beaming
Of the sun in summer, when the sky's jewel,
Sheer orb of heaven, shineth brightest.

So

So neither the sins nor sloth of the body,
Nor its foul vices, are fully able
To wrest from the mind its righteous nature
In any mortal. Though that a man
By the sins of his body, and by its sloth also,
And by vice be assailed for many a season,
And though that his mind be grievously marred
With the foul curse of careless folly,
And a fog of error float before
The dreary spirit of the sons of men,
So that it cannot shine at all so clearly
As it would do if it were able,
Yet there remaineth ever retainèd
Some seed of the truth in the soul of man,
So long as united it liveth with body.
This corn of seed is ever quickened
By means of inquiry, and afterwards also
With good teaching, if it is to grow.
How may any man make out an answer
To anything asked, by aid of reason,
Though others ask him after it righteously,
Closely inquiring, if he containeth
In his own mind neither much nor little
Of righteousness in him nor aught of reason?
Yet no man liveth that is so lacking,
So utterly reft and void of reason,
That he is unable the answer to find
Locked in his breast if others beg him.
For this is sooth, the saw that our Plato,
The ancient sage, once said unto us:

'Each

'Each man,' he said, 'that is unmindful,
Of righteousness careless, him I counsel
Again to turn him towards his thoughts,
His mind's fancy; then will he not fail
In his own bosom, buried deeply,
To find in his spirit righteousness sealed,
Amid the turmoil which ever troubleth
His mind daily most and sorest,
And the heavy sloth that hampereth his body,
And the heavy cares that quell a man
In mind and in spirit at every season.'

XXIII

BOETH. iii. metr. 12. Cf. p. 115.

Oh! truly blessed a man would be
Here in all things, had he the power to see
The bright and spotless heavenly stream,
That grand fountain of every good;
And if from himself he might hurl away
The swart mist, his spirit's darkness.
Yet now it behoveth, God us helping,
With tales of fancy, fables ancient,
To amend thy mind, that thou more surely
May by straight course come to heaven,
To that spot eternal where our souls have rest.

I have

XXIV

Boeth. iv. metr. 1. Cf. p. 120.

I have feather-wings fleeter than a bird's,
With which I may fly far from the earth
Over the high roof of the heaven above us;
But oh! that I might thy mind furnish,
Thy inmost wit, with these my wings,
Until thou mightest on this world of mortals,
On all that there liveth, look down easily!
Then thou mightest mount on pinions
Straight o'er heaven, soaring upwards
Wind through the clouds, and then witness
All from above. Thou couldst also fly
Over the fire that long hath fared,
Many a year, mid air and heaven,
E'en as the Father at first appointed.
Then couldst thou after the course follow
That the sun taketh 'tween the lights of heaven.
And onward speeding reach the sphere
Far up aloft; then in order
That star all cold, alone in station,
Which is the highest of heavenly bodies,
By sea-dwellers beneath the sky
Saturn yclept; cold is that star,
Wholly ice-bound, and highest wand'reth
Over all others up in heaven.
Yea, even then, when thou hast passed
High o'er Saturn, thou mayst still journey,
And then wilt soon be above the sphere

That

That swiftly turneth; and if straight thou goest,
Leaving behind thee the highest heaven,
Then may'st thou at last in the true Light
Have thy portion, whence the sole Prince
Above the firmament far sway holdeth,
And also beneath, o'er every creature,
Guiding the world. A wise King He;
'Tis He that controlleth through all countries
All other kings over the world.
He with His bridle hath firmly bound
The whole compass of heaven and earth;
With His guiding reins well He governeth
And ever steereth with mighty strength
The hastening car of earth and heaven.
He is the only Judge, in justice steadfast,
God unchanging, fair and glorious.
If thou shouldst reach by the right way
Up to that region, that right noble place,
Though for a time thou hast it forgotten,
Yet if again ever thou thither arrive,
Then wilt thou call out and quickly say:
'This, this only is mine own true home,
My land and country; hence am I come,
Here was created, by the Craftsman's might.
Hence will I never hie me away,
But pleasantly here it is my purpose,
The Father willing, firmly to stand.'
If to thee after it shall ever befall
That thou wilt, or may'st to this mirky world
Come once more, thou wilt quickly see

That

That all the unrighteous rulers of earth,
And all the mighty, those men so haughty
That most oppress this weary people,
Are ever themselves utterly wretched,
In all things feeble, failing in might,
Even these proud ones that this poor folk
Now for a season so sorely dreadeth.

XXV

BOETH. iv. metr. 2. Cf. p. 128.

Hear now a tale told of the proud ones,
The kings unrighteous that rule o'er the earth,
That shine among us with wondrous sheen
In many various beautiful vestures,
On high seats raised e'en to the roof,
Decked with gold, adorned with jewels,
On all side hemmed with a countless host
Of thanes and fighters. These too are furnished
With battle harness of wondrous brightness,
With gleaming brands stoutly belted,
And with high state they serve the other,
Obedient all; and then, forth bursting
To every quarter, crush with force
All other nations that neighbouring dwell;
And their lord heedeth, who the host ruleth,
Friend nor foeman, life nor fortune,
But ruthless ever rusheth on all men;
Unto a mad hound most hath he likeness,
Too high uplifted within his heart,

For

For the dominion that each of his darlings,
His friends so trusty, aideth to found.
If a man, however, might pluck from the tyrant
Each sev'ral garment of the royal garb,
And from him sever the various servants,
And likewise the power that once he possessed,
Then might'st thou see that he is most like
To one of the men that now most busily
Press about him in painful service;
He might well be worse, but I ween no better.
If such an one ever, all unwitting,
Happened to lose by lack of fortune
State and raiment and ready service,
And the power also which we have pictured:
If any of such things he seeth no longer,
I know he will fancy that he hath fallen
Deep in a dungeon, or himself he deemeth
In shackles fastened. This I may show,
That from over-measure in any matter,
In food or in dress, or in wine-drinking,
Or in sweetmeats, sorest waxeth
The mighty frenzy of fierce desire
That cloudeth sore the inmost spirit
Of every mortal. Thence come most often
Evil pride of heart and profitless strife.
When rage is burning, within their bosoms
Their hearts are whelmed with waves enormous
Of seething passion, and soon thereafter
Are gripped in turn with grievous gloom,
Firmly caught. Anon there cometh

Hope deceitful with hateful lying
Crying vengeance, for anger craveth
More and more; then maketh promise
The heart so reckless, of all right heedless.
I told thee before in this same book
That somewhat of good by each single member
Of the wide creation is ever craved,
By the natural power that it possesseth.
The unrighteous Kings that rule the earth
To no good ever can give an issue,
By reason of the sin whereof I have spoken;
Nor is that a marvel, for they ever are minded
Themselves to abase, and bow to the power
Of each of the evils named already.
Needs then straitly they must submit
Unto the bondage of those masters,
The chieftains by them already chosen.
Yet is this worse, that a man will not
Resist this mastery e'en for a moment.
If he were ready to begin to wrestle
And the war thereafter to wage for ever,
Then were he never worthy of blame
E'en if beaten, bested at last.

XXVI

BOETH. iv. metr. 3. Cf. p. 127.

I can from fables feigned of yore
Tell thee a story touching nearly

This

This same matter whereof we speak.
In times long past once it betided
That prince Aulixes had possession
Under the Caesar of kingdoms twain.
He was the ruler of the realm of Thracia,
And Retia also ruled as chieftain;
And his liege lord's name, known to the nations,
Was Agamemnon, ruler of all
The Greekish kingdom. It was common rumour
That in those times the Trojan war
Was fought under heaven. That hard fighter,
The Greekish monarch, marched to the field;
Aulixes likewise led five-score ships
Across the sea-stream, and there sat down
Full ten winters. Then the time came
When they had won the realm by war,
And the Greekish prince had dearly purchased
The town of Troy with his true comrades.
Then when to Aulixes leave was given,
The Thracian chieftain, thence to journey,
He left behind him of his hornèd barks
Nine and ninety; none of them thence,
Of these sea-horses, save only one,
He ferried o'er ocean, a foam-washed galley
With threefold oar-bank. Then came cold weather,
Raging storm-wind; the dun waves roaring
Dashed together, far out driving
Into the Wendelsea the warrior crew,
Upon the island where Apollo's daughter
Had been dwelling for many a day.

This same Apollo was of princely race,
Son of Jove. This Jove was a king
Who to great and little lying feigned,
To every goodman, that he was a god
Most high and holy. Thus this hero
The silly people pleased with error,
Till countless folk his feigning trusted;
For he was rightly the realm's protector,
Of royal birth. 'Tis known abroad
That in those days each folk deemed
Its sovereign head the Highest God,
And gave him honour as King of Glory,
If to be ruler he was rightly born.
Jove's father also was further a god,
And the sea-dwellers Saturn named him,
The sons of men. Soon folk named
Each in turn God eternal.
Men say there was also Apollo's daughter,
Well descended, to witless mortals
A goddess seeming, skilled in magic,
In witchcraft dealing and in the delusions,
More than all men, of many a nation.
She was a king's daughter, Circe was called
Among the multitude, and she ruled men
Upon the island to which Aulixes
Chief of Thracia had chanced to come,
In his ship sailing. Soon was it known
To all the troop that tarried there with her,
The prince's coming. Then Circe herself
Loved beyond measure that lord of seamen,

And in the same way with all his soul
Such love for her he felt in his heart
That to his country no care to return
Had power in his mind like that of the maiden;
But he went on dwelling with the woman thereafter,
So long remained that none of his men,
His servants sturdy, would stay with him longer,
But after their hardships for home were longing,
And purposed to leave their dear lord behind.
Now folk began to make a fable,
How that this woman with her witchcraft
Changed men's bodies, and with baleful arts
Caused them to take, the king's true servants,
The bodies of beasts, and bound them afterwards,
And fastened many in fetters also.
Some became wolves and no word could utter,
But from time to time took to howling;
Some were wild boars, and broke into grunting
When they their sorrow sought to lament;
Those that were lions let forth in anger
A dreadful roar when they desired
To hail each other. These hapless mortals,
Both old and young, yea all, were turned
To some wild beast, such as before
During his life-days each most was like;
All save the king, the queen's beloved.
Nought would they taste, any one of them,
Of meat of men, but more they longed for
What beasts supporteth, as was not seemly.
No more was left them of men's likeness,

Of

Of the earth-dwellers, save only reason.
Each of them kept his own mind,
But this with sorrow was sorely beset
For the sad troubles that had assailed it.
Now the foolish ones that in this witchcraft
So long believed, in lying stories,
Notwithstanding knew that no one
The wit of man nor his mind can change
With magic art, though this be able
Mortal bodies for many a day
In form to worsen. Wonderful is it
And mighty, the power that every mind
Hath o'er the slight and sluggish body!
Thou may'st by such examples see most clearly
That every cunning and craft of the body
Come from the mind in every man,
Each single power. It is easy to see
That to every man more harm bringeth
Wickedness of mind than weakness of body,
Of the frail flesh. Let none of the folk
Deem it possible that this poor flesh
May ever the mind of any mortal
Utterly change to its own estate.
Nay, 'tis the faults, each mind's failings,
And the inward purpose prompting each man,
That bend the body to their bidding.

XXVII

Boeth. iv. metr. 4. Cf. p. 133.

Why should ye harass with wicked hatred
Your spirits weary, as the waves of ocean
Set a-tossing the ice-cold sea,
Urged by the blast? Why do ye blame,
Your fate reproach that she hath no power?
Why can ye not bide the bitter coming
Of common death by God created
When he is drawing each day towards you?
Can ye not perceive that he is ever pursuing
Each thing begotten, of earthly bearing,
Beasts and birds? Death also is busy
After mankind, all over this earth,
The dreadful huntsman, holding the chase;
Nor will he truly the trail abandon
Ere that he catch at last the quarry
That he was pursuing. Oh! it is pitiful
That borough-dwellers cannot bide him,
But luckless mortals like the race of birds
Are flying onward fain to meet him,
Or as beasts of the forest that are ever fighting,
Each one seeking to slay the other.
But it is wicked for any wight
That towards another in his inmost temper
He should hatred bear, like bird or beast;
But most right it were that every mortal
To others should render their due reward,

To

To all earth-dwellers, whatever they earn
By their life-works. He should love, that is,
All true men most tenderly,
And spare the wicked, as we have said.
The man himself he must love in mind,
And all his vices view with hatred,
And cut them away as best he can.

XXVIII

BOETH. iv. metr. 5. Cf. p. 139.

What man that learning on earth lacketh
Doth marvel not at the moving clouds,
The swift heavens, the stars' wheeling,
How never ceasing they spin around
The mass of earth? Which of mankind
No wonder showeth at these shining bodies,
How that some of them a lesser space
Of course revolve, and others run
In longer circle? One of these lights
Is by world-men the Waggon Shafts called.
This a shorter course and journey keepeth,
A smaller circle than other stars,
For it turneth about the heavenly axle
At the northern end, nigh revolving.
On this same axle all is circling,
The spacious heavens are swiftly speeding,
Southward rushing, swift, untiring.
What earthly mortal doth not marvel,

Save the wise ones who wist before,
That many stars a motion wider
Have in the heavens, some, however,
Run more straitly round the axle's end,
And move more widely when round its middle
They urge their race? One of these orbs
Is Saturn called: in some thirty winters
He girdleth round this globe of earth.
Bootes also brightly shineth,
Another star that to his station
In years as many moveth round,
E'en to the place from which he parted.
What mortal is there that marvelleth not
How that some stars sink in ocean,
Under the sea-waves, as men do suppose?
Some also deem that the sun doth so;
But none the less false is this their fancy,
For neither at even nor in early morning
Is he nearer the ocean than at high noon.
Yet do men deem that he diveth to ocean,
Into the sea, when he sinketh to setting.
Who in the world wondereth not
At the full moon, when in a moment
She is robbed of her beauty beneath the clouds.
With darkness covered? What mortal cannot
See with wonder the ways of all stars,
Why in bright weather they beam not forth
Before the sun, when such is their custom
In the middle of night before the moon,
When clear is heaven? How many a man,

At all such things sorely wond'reth,
But marvelleth not that men and beasts,
Every creature, keep up anger
Great and useless, each against other,
Never ceasing? It is a strange thing
That men do not marvel how oft 'mid the clouds
The thunder soundeth, then for a space
Lieth silent; and likewise how
Waves and sea-shore are warring ever,
The wind and billows. Who wondereth at this,
Or at another thing also, why ice is able
To come from water? When the sun shineth
Hot in splendour. soon it hasteneth,
The wondrous ice-pool, once more to its kind,
Even to water. No wonder seemeth
To any of mortals what he may see
Day by day; but the doited people
What they see but seldom sooner marvel.
Though to the minds of men of wisdom
It seem much less matter of wonder.
To unsteadfast men it ever seemeth
No part of the ancient early creation,
What they see seldom; but still they ween,
World-men hold that by chance it happeneth,
Newly befalleth, if to any before
It hath not appeared; a pity 'tis so!
But if any of them ever becometh
So lusting for knowledge that he beginneth to learn
Wise ways many, and the Warden of Life
From his mind cleareth the mountain of folly

That

That hath buried it and abode with it long,
Then I know well that he will not marvel
At many a thing that now to mankind
A sign and a wonder everywhere seemeth.

XXIX

Boeth. iv. metr. 6. Cf. p. 142.

If thou desirest deeply to learn
The lofty power of the world's Lord
With clear understanding, consider diligently
The stars of heaven, how they ever stand
In lasting peace; long have they done so,
Even as the Prince of Glory hath prepared them
At their first forming, so that the fiery one,
The sun, may not approach the cold one's path,
The moon's marches. Lo! the mighty orbs
Cross not the one the course of the other
Until it hath fleeted far on its way.
Nor will that star e'er seek in its journey
The west of the heavens, to which wise men give
The name of Ursa. All other stars
After the sun sink with the heavens
Below earth's base; alone he bideth.
It is no wonder; he is wondrously near
The higher axle-end of the heavenly sphere.
Then brightly beameth one star beyond others
That soareth in the east, the sun preceding;
Him the sons of men star of the morning

Call

Call under heaven; he heraldeth day
To men in the boroughs; then he bringeth
The glorious sun, the same day for all.
Fair and shining is the forerunner,
East up-leaping the sun he leadeth;
And again after the sun to his setting glideth,
West under world. When night cometh,
His name the nations change for another,
And then they style him Star of evening.
More swift than the sun, once they have set,
He speedeth past him, that star all noble,
Until over again in the east he riseth,
To men appearing, the sun preceding.
Those noble orbs night from day
By the Lord's power have fairly parted,
Sun and moon, in high peace moving
As from the first the Father appointed.
Thou needest not fear that these fair ones
Will ever be sated with this their service
Ere doomsday come. Therein He dealeth,
Mankind's Maker, as Him meet seemeth;
For he suffereth them not, the Sovran God,
To be at the same time on one side of heaven,
Lest they ruin the rest of creation.
But God Eternal all things guideth,
The broad creation, in bonds of peace.
Dryness sometimes driveth out wet;
Whiles they mingle, by the Master's craft,
Cold and heat. To highest heaven
The flame all bright sometimes flieth

Light

Light through the air, behind it leaving
The weight of the earthly, though for a while
The cold earth closely within herself kept it
Held and hidden by the might of the Holy,
By the King's commandment. Each plant cometh,
Brought forth by earth every year,
And the heat of summer for the sons of men.
Every year yieldeth and drieth
O'er land's wide surface seed and leaflet.
Harvest offereth to hands of mortals
Store of ripeness; then rain and hailstorm
And snow too cometh, soaking the ground
In time of winter, when fierce is weather.
For earth receiveth every seed-grain,
And maketh it swell every season,
And in the spring-time leaves are sprouting.
But the kind Master for mankind's children,
To all that groweth giveth nurture,
To fruits in the world; bringeth them forth
When He chooseth, Chief of heaven,
And them discovereth to the dwellers on earth,
And anon removeth, mankind's Saviour.
The Highest Good on His high-seat
Sole King sitteth, and this world spacious
Doth His service; all His subjects
Thence He ruleth with His reins of leading.
No marvel is this; He is God of multitudes,
King and Lord of all that liveth,
Fount and First Cause of all His creatures,
Maker and Worker of this our world,

Law

Law and Wisdom for the livers therein.
All His creatures upon His errands
Hence He sendeth and hither biddeth.
Had He not stablish'd each so steady,
All His creatures, every one of them,
Breaking away had burst asunder,
In deadly hate had come to naught;
Yea, like foes they had fallen apart,
Though one love only all things created
In heaven and earth have in common,
That such a Leader they serve together,
All of them fain that the Father ruleth.
No need for wonder, for no one thing
Could ever hope to hold its life
Unless all were serving their common Source,
With all their might, their glorious Master.

XXX

BOETH. v. metr. 2. Cf. p. 159.

In the East Omerus among the Greeks
Was in that country in songs most cunning,
Of Firgilius also friend and teacher,
Of that famed maker, best of masters.
Now this Omerus often and often
On the sun's splendour spent high praises,
His noble powers showed to the people
In glee and story, again and again.
Yet the sun cannot beam, for all his brightness,

O'er

O'er all creation nor anywhere near it;
And even those creatures on which he can shine
He cannot illumine with equal light
Inside and out. But the Almighty
Ruler and Worker of the world's creatures
His own work overlooketh;
All creatures alike He looketh over.
He is the true Sun, and rightly so;
Such in His honour we may sing truly.

XXXI

Boeth. v. metr. 5. Cf. p. 161.

Thou may'st know, if thou wilt notice,
That many creatures of various kinds
Fare over earth with unlike motions,
With gait and colour quite diverse,
And aspects also of endless kinds,
Queer and common. Some creep and crawl
With all their body bound to the ground;
No wings them help; on feet they walk not,
Nor pace the earth, as was them appointed.
Some on two feet fare o'er the ground,
Some are four-footed; some in flight
Wing 'neath the clouds. Yet each creature
Is drooping earthward, stooping downward,
On the ground looking, longing for earth,
Some need-driven, some through greed.
Man only goeth of all God's creatures

With

With gait upright, gazing upwards.
This is a token that he shall turn
His trust and his mind more up than down,
To the heavens above, lest he bend his thoughts
Like beasts earthward. It is not meet
That the mind of a mortal should remain below
While his face he holdeth up to heaven.

NOTES

PAGE 1. **Raedgod and Alaric.** Raedgod, generally known in history as Raedagaisus, has in the Anglo-Saxon the forms Rædgota, Rædgod, and Rædgot. Alaric has the forms Aleric and Eallerica.

The mountains. The Alps, called Muntgiop in Metrum i.

Amuling, that is, one of the royal line of Amul or Amal, a legendary Gothic king. Charles Kingsley uses the word in his *Hypatia.*

Consul. The A.S. word is *heretoga*, i. e. 'army leader,' or 'chief'; and this is the word used throughout the book for 'consul.'

Alfred follows the Orthodox Church legend about Boethius and his intrigues, and also about the character of Theodoric.

P. 3. In chap. iii Alfred transposes the order of his original. He omits the description of Philosophy as a majestic woman, and the passage where Boethius describes his accusers and their plots against him; also Bk. i. metra 3 and 4.

Her disciples, i. e. the various philosophical sects.

P. 4. **Philosophy, the spirit of Wisdom.** The A.S. words are *se wisdom and seo gesceadwisnes*, i. e. Wisdom and Reason. As the book is so famous under the title of *The Consolation of Philosophy*, this rendering of *Wisdom* has

 been

been kept throughout. Alfred calls Philosophy's interlocutor *Mod* or 'mind,' the modern English 'mood,' throughout the book, except in one or two places where he calls him Boethius. When question and answer follow rapidly, the first person singular is used, as in the Latin.

P. 7. **Citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem**; cf. Heb. xi. 13–16. Boethius speaks merely of Roman citizenship. This allusion is taken from a Latin commentary. For details concerning the use of the commentaries made by Alfred, see the Oxford edition of Alfred's *Boethius*, Introduction.

When the sun's glow, &c. Greatly abridged from Boeth. Bk. i. metr. 6.

P. 13. Bk. ii. metr. 1, concerning Fortune's fickleness, is omitted.

Alfred has failed to perceive that the passage at the bottom of p. 13, beginning 'I would speak,' is in the original put in the mouth of Fortune. However, he has made up for this on p. 16, where he makes Worldly Happiness speak.

P. 15. Alfred omits a passage about Paullus shedding tears over the misfortunes of King Perseus, his prisoner; and also an allusion (in Greek) to the two jars standing at the threshold of Zeus, one full of blessings, the other of calamities.

Pp. 17–18. In chap. viii a good deal is omitted relating to Boethius' distinctions and blessings. Chap. ix is a condensation of bk. ii. metr. 3.

P. 19. **The greatest unhappiness in this present life is**, &c. We have here a thought expressed by Dante and Tennyson among modern poets.

P. 25. **The holy martyrs.** This is taken from a Latin commentary.

Christ dwelleth, &c. From a commentary.

P. 29. **If therefore thou wouldst know**, &c. Perhaps this passage suggested part of chap. xvii to Alfred.

P. 33.

P. 33. **The pirate host.** This is substituted by Alfred for the *classica saeva* of the original.

P. 36. **The Roman prince called Liberius.** This name arises from mistaking the meaning of the Latin *liberum quendam.*

P. 38. **Here endeth the first book, &c.** A mistake, for the first book really ends with chap. vi. p. 11.

P. 41. The contents of this chapter are Alfred's own words, though apparently suggested by a commentary.

P. 42. **The book that is called Astralogium.** The Latin has *astrologicis demonstrationibus.*

P. 48. **The famous and wise goldsmith, Weland.** This name, famous in Teutonic legend, is substituted by Alfred for the Latin *Fabricius.* The king has come to grief in identifying Brutus with Cassius.

P. 50. Chap. xxi is a great expansion of Boeth. bk. ii. metr. 8, treating of the power of Love.

P. 51. The passages in italics are founded on explanatory notes in the commentaries.

P. 66. Alfred was probably led into the error of mistaking Catullus the poet for Catulus by the reading of his copy of Boethius, as a MS. still exists with the reading *Catulus.* But his commentary would have told him that the poet was meant.

The unrighteous King Theodoric. Alfred here mistakes the meaning of the Latin *Decoratus*, the name of one of the chief accusers of Boethius.

P. 69. **The money paid yearly to the soldiers.** The Latin for the whole of this passage runs, 'Atqui praetura magna olim potestas, nunc inane nomen et senatorii census gravis sarcina. Si quis quondam populi curasset annonam, magnus habebatur, nunc ea praefectura quid abiectius?'

P. 71. Alfred's account of Dionysius and the hanging sword is more lively than the Latin, 'expertus sortis suae periculorum

periculorum tyrannus regni metus pendentis supra verticem gladii terrore simulavit.'

The allusion to Seneca in the Latin is simply, 'Nero Senecam familiarem praeceptoremque suum ad eligendae mortis coegit arbitrium.'

P. 73. **O worldly glory, &c.** This is an incorrect rendering of a Greek quotation. It may be mentioned that the Greek quotations in the Latin MSS. of the *De Consolatione* suffered in transcription.

P. 76. **A most unwonted and unnatural evil, &c.** The Latin has 'nescioquem filios invenisse tortores.'

P. 87. **Our philosopher Plato.** In the *Timaeus*.

The prayer is an expansion of twenty-eight lines in the Latin.

P. 90. **One of these natures is, &c.** This is from a commentary, where it is explained that by the words of Boethius *triplicis naturae media anima* must be understood *anima rationabilis*, *anima irascibilis*, and *anima concupiscibilis*.

P. 91. **To Thee all men are hastening.** The commentary has *per quem perveniamus ad te*.

P. 100. **Ah well, ye men, &c.** Allusions in the Latin *carmen* (bk. iii. metr. 10) to Tagus, Hermus, and Indus are omitted by Alfred.

P. 108. **How then can any man, &c.** Alfred has mistaken the sense of the Latin, *Nam cur rogati sponte recta censetis*. Also Plato's doctrine is summarized by Boethius in the words *Quod quisque discit, immemor recordatur*.

P. 109. Alfred continually plays on the words 'God' and 'good,' which were often written alike in Anglo-Saxon, though pronounced differently, 'God' having probably its modern pronunciation, and 'good' approximately the modern pronunciation of 'goad.'

The city of True Happiness stands for the Latin *patriam*.

P. 112.

P. 112. The word used by Alfred for *giants* is *gigantes*, whereas we might have expected an equivalent word taken from Germanic legend. In the *Beowulf*, however, the word *gigant* occurs.

In Anglo-Saxon MSS. we find classical and biblical proper names curiously distorted, as, for instance, in Alfred's translation of Orosius. This probably was due to corruptions in the Latin MSS.

The biblical story is suggested by a commentary in this connexion.

P. 115. Parmenides, as quoted by Plato in the *Timaeus*, said that the divine substance was 'like a massive perfect sphere.' Alfred was probably misled by a Latin gloss immediately following the Greek words.

A precept of the wise Plato; from the *Timaeus*.

P. 120. **The heavenly city.** A commentary has *paradysum*. The Latin is *domum*.

Saturn, *Gelidi senis* are the words of the original.

Pp. 125–127. An expanded and very free version.

P. 129. **As once it was the custom of the Romans**, &c. The Latin words are *uti currendi in stadio, propter quam curritur, iacet praemium coronae.*

P. 133. **Ithacige** means literally 'the island of Ithaca,' the ending *-ige*, akin to the modern English *-ey* or *-y*, or its Norse equivalent, being found in many modern names, such as Athelney, Bermondsey, &c.

Retie is doubtless a mistake for the Latin *Neritii*, an adjective applied to Ulysses, the word in some MSS. being written *ne ritii*. Neritos was a mountain in Ithaca.

Wendelsea. This is the usual Anglo-Saxon name for the Mediterranean. Cf. the Introduction to Alfred's *Orosius*.

P. 140. **Doomsday.** The Latin has *aeterna*.

Pp. 146–147. Alfred has availed himself of the commentaries for most of his astronomical notes here. The *Wain Shafts* are for the Latin *Arcturi sidera*.

P. 149.

P. 149. **For it is nigh unto the time,** &c. Alfred may here be alluding to himself and his literary plans.

P. 151. This long and tedious simile of the wheel was suggested by a commentary.

P. 155. **The wise man of old said,** &c. This is apparently a wild shot by Alfred at the meaning of the Greek quotation, *ἀνδρὸς δὴ ἱεροῦ δέμας αἰθέρες οἰκοδόμησαν*. A quotation from Lucan is omitted, and further on a line from the *Iliad*.

P. 162. **Ah! ye wise men,** &c. The Latin *carmen* contains an account of the labours of Hercules, and numerous other mythological allusions, none of which are noticed by Alfred, who merely expands and reiterates the central idea.

P. 164. Bk. v. metr. 1 is omitted.

P. 165. **Though Homer,** &c. Alfred means that Homer was Virgil's master and model in poetry. In metr. xxx, however, he is called Virgil's 'friend.'

P. 166. **I can answer this point very easily,** &c. Henceforward to the end of the book Alfred entirely recasts his original. Boethius' language becomes abstract and difficult, and could hardly have been rendered even freely into the English of Alfred's day.

P. 167. Bk. v. metr. 3 is omitted, and also metr. 4.

P. 175. At the end of the book comes a prayer in the later MS., but it is probably a late addition.

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